TURN-AROUND SCHOOLS:

District Strategies for Success and Sustainability

PRACTICAL TOOLS
for District Transformation

ERS
Education Resource Strategies

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR DISTRICT TRANSFORMATION

Based on firsthand observations by Education Resource Strategies, Inc., of resource use in large urban school systems, this series is designed to help districts begin the process of identifying and addressing resource decisions that don't support improving student performance. This guide is one of six publications specifically designed to help district leaders analyze and optimize school system resource allocation.

ResourceCheck

ResourceCheck is an easy-to-use online self-assessment tool all district leaders can use to measure current resource use relative to best practices. This tool will give you a quick sense of where you should look deeper to get a better picture of what your district is doing. Users answer questions about district resource policies and practices and use the answers to evaluate performance.

Seven Strategies for District Transformation

Targeted for superintendents, this guide presents a comprehensive vision of seven strategies presented in *ResourceCheck* that are integral elements of effective district transformation.

Resource Guides

Targeted for district leaders including chief operating officers, chief finance officers, and chief academic officers and their staffs, four guides offer practical guidance and action steps that can help districts successfully challenge and transform their education system. Guides focus on school funding systems, school design, the teaching job, and district strategies for turnaround schools.

All six electronic publications can be found at www.ERStrategies.org.

ABOUT ERS

Education Resource Strategies, Inc. (ERS), is a nonprofit organization that works extensively with large urban public school systems to rethink the use of district- and school-level resources and build strategies for improved instruction and performance.

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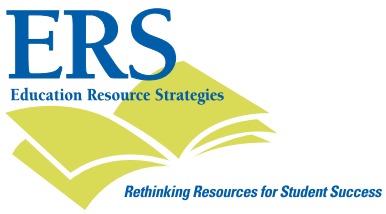

DATA SOURCES

Unless otherwise noted, all data come from ERS work in urban school districts. To maintain confidentiality, we have used the labeling convention of "District A," "District B," etc. However, these labels do not consistently reflect the same district from figure to figure. Districts include:

Atlanta (2005–08)
Baltimore (2007–08)
Boston (2005–06)
Charlotte-Mecklenburg (2007–08)
Chicago (2005–06)
Los Angeles (2005–06)
Milwaukee (2009–10)
Philadelphia (2008–09)
Rochester (2008–10)
Seattle (2009–10)
St. Paul (2005–06)
Washington, DC (2004–05)

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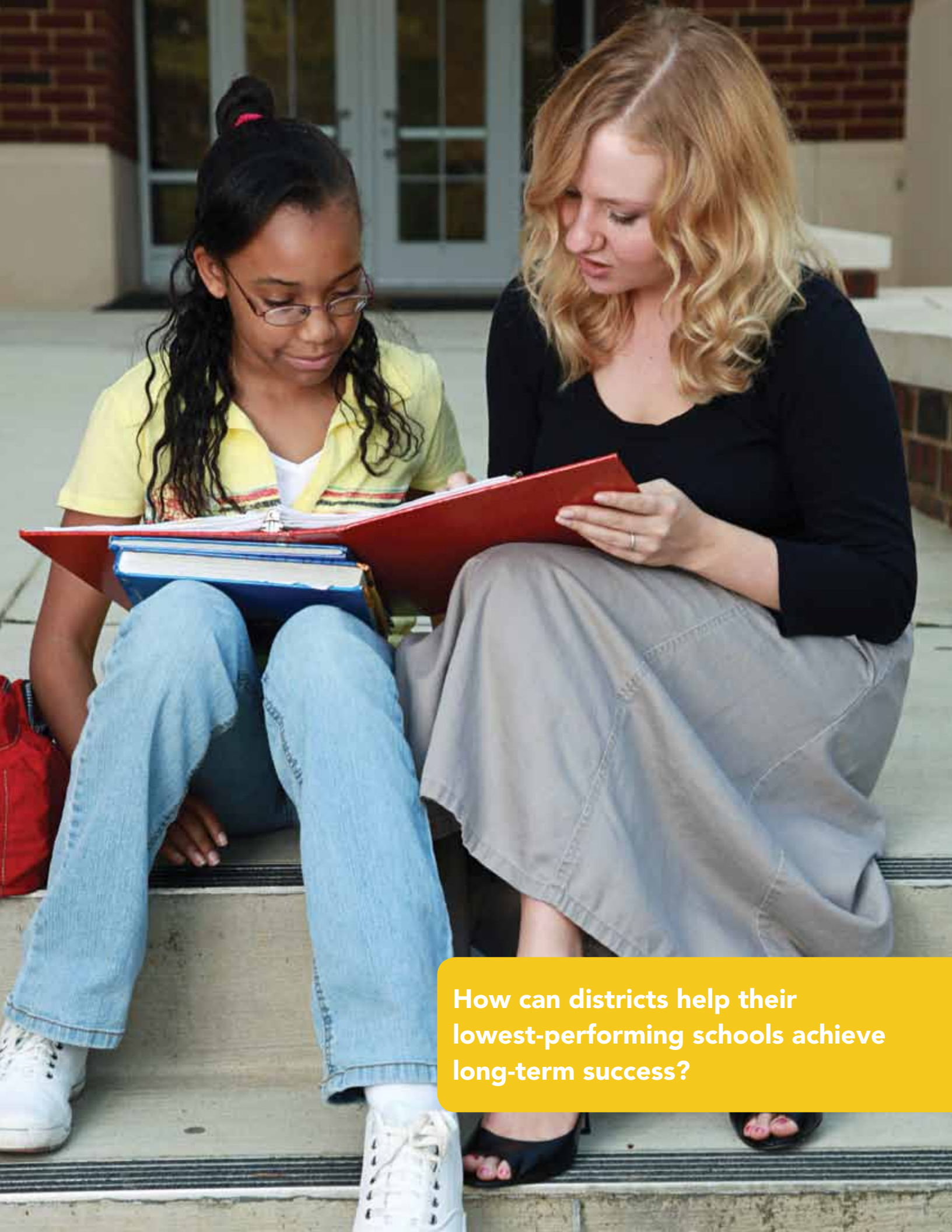


How can districts help their lowest-performing schools achieve long-term success?

INTRODUCTION

SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS have been trying for years to improve persistently poorly performing schools, yet the report card on school improvement is decidedly mixed. Given an unprecedented influx of federal resources and increased attention on accountability for resources, it's time to learn what works. More money and strong commitment will help, but they are not enough to ensure success. Districts need to change the game.

Turnaround efforts at individual schools will not result in widespread, sustainable change without fundamental shifts in the way districts evaluate school, student, and teacher needs and match resources and support to meet those needs. Your challenge is to develop district capacity to address these four questions:

1. What does each school need?
2. What does each school get now?
3. Does your district have an effective turnaround program?
4. What are the right intervention strategies for each school?

At the end of the school year in 2008, Sterling Elementary School in Charlotte, NC, was struggling. Student results on state testing were low and declining. The school's large population of English language learners and students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch presented ongoing challenges. Teachers were increasingly unhappy.

A year later, the picture looked very different. Sterling had experienced a 23 percent increase in students scoring proficient or above in math on state tests and a 14 percent increase in reading (far exceeding district averages). Teachers worked together in 90-minute planning periods twice weekly to write common assessments, review student data, and plan for further improvement. Morale and tone at the school had improved dramatically.

Sterling's experience was not a fluke. It was part of a districtwide improvement strategy focused on providing extra and targeted resources to the lowest-performing schools. In 2006, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's leadership began systematically identifying the highest-needs schools and organized them into an Achievement Zone. Schools in this zone receive additional monetary and central office support. Sterling was able to use these resources to improve teaching and leadership effectiveness and provide extra intervention for struggling students.

But additional resources and attention weren't enough to break the cycle of Sterling's chronic underperformance; major changes in culture, teacher capacity, and leadership were needed as well. Pete Gorman, Charlotte's superintendent, established the Strategic Staffing initiative to catalyze these changes. The district made the controversial decision to move a top-performing principal to the school; he was able to bring with him a team of high-performing teachers who received extra compensation for agreeing to move to Sterling and help turn the school around. The principal also was given the flexibility to make changes in how resources are used at the school and the authority to transfer staff members who were not contributing to or supportive of the turnaround efforts. By recognizing the critical needs at Sterling and other low-performing schools and leveraging existing district resources to address those needs, Charlotte has put Sterling on the path to success.

Sterling's story is one of the rare successes in turning around persistently low-achieving schools. The goal of this guide is to help district leaders bring about many more such successes.

Schools and districts have been trying for years to improve persistently poorly performing schools. They have poured additional resources and support into these schools, introduced new and promising programs, and added accountability measures. The report card on school improvement is decidedly mixed, with some districts demonstrating success and others not. Why? Based on our experience in working with urban districts for 15 years, we conclude that successful *school* turnaround also requires *district* turnaround. There is still much to learn about what it takes to turn around persistently low-performing schools in ways that last, but rethinking the surrounding system must be a critical part of the solution. **More money and strong will are not enough. Districts need to change the game.**

Even the most successful turnaround efforts at individual schools will not result in widespread, sustainable change without fundamental shifts in the way districts evaluate school, student, and teacher needs and match resources and support to meet those needs. Building this capacity as part of a districtwide turnaround strategy will allow districts to continuously assess and address the needs of all schools in the districts, not just the lowest-performing schools.

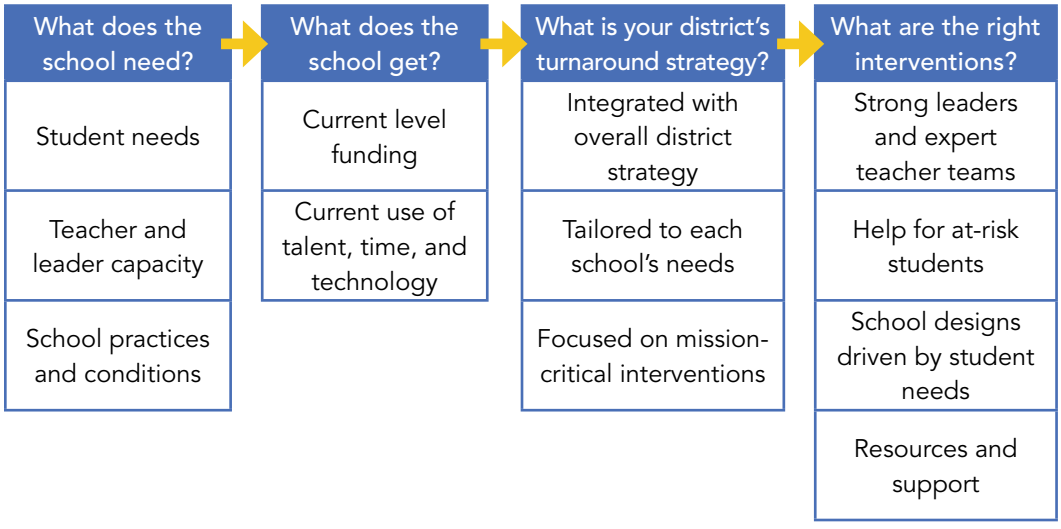
Our work in more than a dozen urban districts reveals that the path to successful turnaround begins at the district level. Your challenge is to develop district capacity to address these four questions:

1. **What does each school need?** To answer this question, districts must develop and adhere to a comprehensive, systemic approach to identify the needs of schools, students, and teachers. Districts must be able to evaluate the needs of current and incoming students; examine whether the school has the teacher and leadership capacity to address student needs; and assess how well the school is implementing essential practices and conditions. Ideally, the district will have a clear, ongoing strategy to measure school and student needs and performance for all schools, not just the lowest-performing schools.

2. **What does each school get now?** Districts must identify all resources currently available to each school and understand how effectively schools are using those resources to tailor instruction, instructional time, and attention to student needs and to support teachers in improving instructional quality.

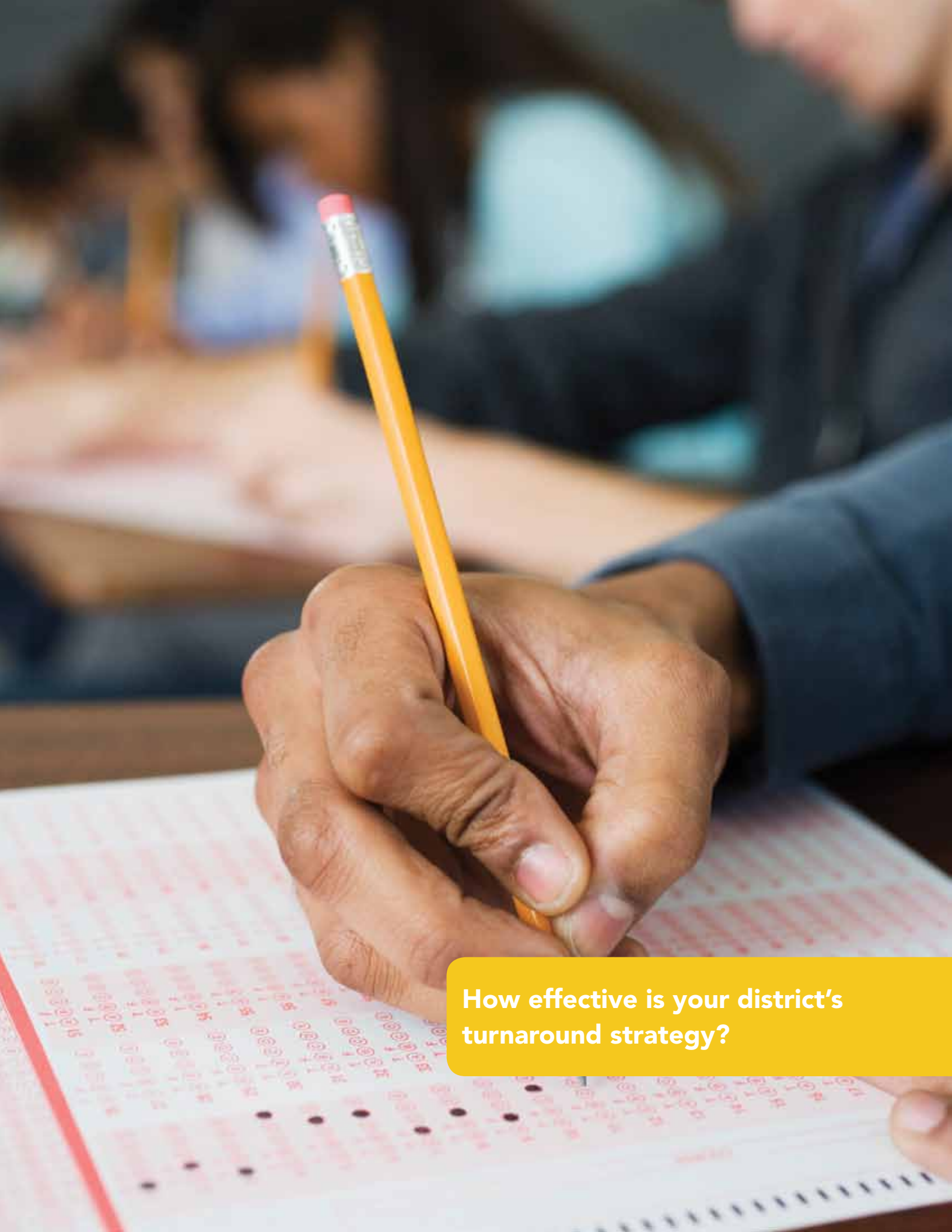
3. **Does your district have an effective turnaround program?** Districts should have a comprehensive turnaround strategy focused on changing underlying structures of failing schools, not a one-size-fits-all approach nor a mix of standalone, add-on programs. The strategy should focus investments in the most powerful or "mission-critical" interventions.

4. **What are the right intervention strategies for each school?** Districts must aggressively target those challenges that make persistently low-performing schools different from other schools and provide the additional resources and support that each individual school needs to overcome the challenges. Key priorities, in order of importance, are to assure strong leaders and expert teacher teams; provide baseline health, social, and emotional help for at-risk students; implement school designs that organize teaching expertise, time, and attention to match student needs; and ensure necessary resources and support.



This guide offers practical guidance for school turnaround tailored to your district's situation.

- Use the Self-Assessment to determine how well your district currently supports turnaround and to measure current practice against optimal interventions.
- Work through a four-step process to answer the key questions of what your schools need, what resources your schools get and how they use them, whether your district has an effective turnaround program, and whether you are investing in the most important interventions. You will find worksheets at the back of the guide to help you.
- Identify actions you can take.
- Make the best short-term budget decisions, leverage the opportunity of federal funding, and lay the foundation for long-term success.



How effective is your district's turnaround strategy?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

THIS SECTION OFFERS a tool for assessing your district's approach to school turnaround and for measuring your current practice against best practice in interventions, such as staffing, school design, and support. This tool can help you set priorities for your turnaround efforts.

INSTRUCTIONS

For each best practice, circle the choice that is closest to current practice in your district. If you don't know the answer, leave it blank. Give yourself one point for every 1, two points for every 2, and three points for every 3.

EVALUATING YOUR SCORE

First, take a look at all the areas in which you circled a 1. These are the areas on which you need to focus to improve your district's approach to turnaround. Second, to get an overall sense of how your district compares to best practices, compute your score:

- **If your total score is between 61 and 78** and there is clear evidence of performance improvement in your turnaround schools, you're on the right track. Your district is likely doing a good job providing turnaround schools with the resources and support they need to succeed.
- **If your total score is between 43 and 60,** there are opportunities for improvement in your district. Look through the Self-Assessment to identify the areas where you scored lower and turn to those sections of this guide for ideas on how to diagnose and address your funding issues.
- **If your total score is below 42,** you need to reexamine your approach to turnaround schools. Read the rest of this guide for direction on how to diagnose and address your funding issues.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL NEED? Does your district systematically assess student needs, teacher capacity, and school practice at each school?

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)
1. The district has an effective method for evaluating student needs at each school. Why is this important? The district needs good information about student needs, including performance, risk factors, and whether the student has special education needs or is an English language learner (ELL) in order to ensure each school has the resources and support required to address those needs.	1. The district has no effective method for tracking student needs by school. 2. The district tracks enrollment of special populations (e.g., special education, ELL, free and reduced-price lunch) by school. 3. The district has a clear, well-established process for evaluating student needs by school that includes measures of performance, risk factors, and special populations.
POINTS: _____	
2. The district deliberately manages the distribution of the highest-needs populations across schools. Why is this important? Many low-performing schools have higher-than-average populations of the highest-needs students — students significantly behind grade level, special education students, ELL students, and free and reduced-price lunch students. Although districts may choose to keep these students together at specific schools for instructional or other reasons, it is critical that the district provide supplemental resources and support to meet these higher needs.	1. The district does not deliberately manage the distribution of the highest-needs populations. 2. The district provides additional resources to the highest-needs student populations (e.g., self-contained special education) but does not actively manage the assignment of these populations. 3. The district has examined the distribution of students at turnaround schools and taken action either to change student assignment or to ensure that sufficient resources are available policies for those schools.
POINTS: _____	

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)	
3. The district has an effective method for evaluating principal performance. Why is this important? The district needs good information about principal performance, capacity, and developmental needs to effectively match staff at turnaround schools to student needs.	1. The district has no effective method for evaluating principal performance. 2. The district evaluation system is primarily qualitative, based on clearly defined standards. 3. The district has an effective method for evaluating principal performance relative to clearly defined standards that combines qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of different sources, including school and student performance.	**POINTS:** _____
4. The district has an effective method for evaluating teacher performance. Why is this important? The district needs good information about teacher performance, capacity, and developmental needs to effectively match staff at turnaround schools to student needs.	1. The district has no effective method for evaluating teacher performance. 2. The district evaluation system relies primarily on observations and/or does not systematically assess teacher performance. 3. The district has an effective method for evaluating teacher performance that draws on a variety of different data sources, including observations, responsibilities, and student outcomes.	**POINTS:** _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)
5. The district has an effective method for evaluating school practice. Why is this important? In addition to having a clear understanding about the needs of the students and the skills and capacity of the teachers and principals in each turnaround school, districts need to assess what that school is already doing to support its students. Even the lowest-performing schools may already be on a trajectory for improvement and need only incremental support to continue progressing; other schools will need more fundamental changes.	1. The district has no clear method for assessing school practice. 2. The district has a well-defined set of school essentials but does not use them as a part of school planning to inform school priorities and support. 3. The district has a well-defined set of school essentials that are a central part of school improvement planning and inform school priorities and support.

POINTS: _____

WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL GET? Does your district allocate resources equitably to schools based on need? Do schools use those resources effectively to support instructional goals?

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)	
1. The district ensures that students with greater learning challenges, such as students significantly behind grade level, special education students, ELL students, and students in poverty, *at all schools* receive additional resources to support these needs. Why is this important? Districts must fund schools sufficiently to allow them to serve their populations. Students with different learning needs may require high levels of funding. Persistently low-performing schools often have high concentrations of exceptionally needy students. Broad-brush district funding formulas may not fully account for these needs. Schools should receive the level of resources they need to serve their students regardless of turnaround status.	1. Additional resources for greater student needs come mostly through categorical funds and address only some categories of struggling students. 2. Additional resources for greater student needs come mostly through categorical funds but address all four student types listed to the left. 3. The district leverages both general and categorical funding to provide additional funding to students with high needs, including special education, ELL, poverty, and students who are off-track or struggling academically.	**POINTS:** _____
2. The district considers current funding levels when determining additional funding and support for turnaround schools. Why is this important? It is impossible to ensure that turnaround schools are getting the support and resources they need without considering their *total* resources — base funding plus additional turnaround funding. Some turnaround schools may be so underfunded that they need additional support on top of the turnaround funding; others may already have significant resources and realignment of those resources is more critical than adding funds.	1. All turnaround schools receive the same incremental funding. 2. All turnaround schools receive the same incremental funding but some additional funding is available for schools with a currently extremely low funding level. 3. The district considers current funding levels when determining additional turnaround funding and the level of additional funding varies from school to school based on need and current funding.	**POINTS:** _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT

		Current practice in your district (circle best answer)
POINTS: _____	**3. Turnaround schools have lower class sizes and teacher loads for the most critical grades, subjects, and students.** Why is this important? Class size guidelines that target the same class sizes regardless of subject or grade generally result in higher class sizes for core subjects in lower grades. Turnaround schools should actively manage class sizes, encouraging smaller classes for struggling learners and in critical grades and subjects.	1. Class size targets vary only by student type (e.g., special education, ELL) and for electives, such as physical education. 2. Class size targets vary by grade and subject. 3. Schools deliberately manage class size targets based on student needs.
POINTS: _____	**4. Turnaround schools maximize instructional time in core academic subjects.** Why is this important? Students who are struggling academically and may be significantly behind grade level need additional time in key academic subjects to catch up to their peers. Standard schedules provide only 45–60 minutes per day per subject.	1. Schools do not provide additional time in core academic subjects. 2. Some schools provide additional time in some subjects. 3. All schools provide additional time in English language arts and math.
POINTS: _____	**5. Turnaround schools extend learning time for students who need it.** Why is this important? The standard length of school day and year limits the extra learning time that struggling learners have to catch up to their peers. Districts and schools must work to provide time during, before, or after the school day; during the summer; or through a combination of these.	1. Schools do not extend learning time. 2. Some schools provide extra time for struggling students. 3. All schools provide extra time for struggling students.
POINTS: _____	**6. The district provides guidelines and shares best practices on how to differentiate instructional time and increase individual attention based on student need.** Why is this important? Lack of principal knowledge and limited scheduling and staffing options prevent the best use of student and teacher time. Districts should identify, document, and share successful approaches for providing individualized instruction.	1. The district provides limited support. 2. The district provides some support to some turnaround schools. 3. The district provides significant support to all turnaround schools.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR TURNAROUND STRATEGY? Does your district have an effective turnaround program that tailors interventions to meet individual school needs?

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)	
1. The district has a systematic way to assess school performance for all schools and to identify which schools should be turnaround schools. Why is this important? Without a clear method for evaluating school-level performance growth, it is impossible for district leadership to make the best decisions about which schools need turnaround support and how much support they need.	1. The district does not have a clear, well-established process for assessing school performance or clear criteria for which schools are turnaround schools. 2. The district has a process for assessing school performance but does not have clear criteria for which schools are turnaround schools. 3. The district has clear, well-established processes for assessing school performance and clear criteria for which schools are turnaround schools.	**POINTS:** _____
2. The district has a deliberate turnaround strategy for persistently low-performing schools. Why is this important? Breaking the cycle of failure in turnaround schools requires evaluating all aspects of a school's staff, schedule, student and teacher supports, and funding. Ad hoc interventions that do not integrate all of these factors are likely to fail.	1. The district has no specific strategies for low-performing schools. 2. The district has a variety of programmatic interventions, each applied independently to some subset of low-performing schools. 3. The district has a deliberate, comprehensive turnaround strategy for all persistently low-performing schools.	**POINTS:** _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT

		Current practice in your district (circle best answer)
POINTS: _____	**3. If your school has a comprehensive turnaround strategy in place, how many of these components does the turnaround strategy have?** • **A transformational leader and expert teacher teams** • **Help for at-risk students** • **School designs that provide additional time and individualized interventions based on student needs** • **Additional resources and support** Why is this important? Turnaround schools require all four of these critical interventions to break the cycle of failure.	1. The turnaround strategy has zero or one of the components listed to the left. 2. The turnaround strategy has two or three of the components listed to the left. 3. The turnaround strategy has all four components listed to the left.
POINTS: _____	**4. The district's method for determining which federal intervention strategy is most appropriate for each turnaround school is grounded in each school's student needs and performance, teacher leadership capacity, and instructional practice.** Why is this important? Each of the four federal strategies can have a dramatic effect on school performance. However, if the intervention provided does not adequately address school and student needs, it cannot succeed.	1. There is no clear method for determining the federal intervention approach. 2. The choice of federal intervention model takes some but not all of these factors into account. 3. School and student needs drive the choice of federal intervention model.
POINTS: _____	**5. Investments in turnaround schools are used to change underlying structures and not for add-ons to existing programs (e.g., tutoring, afterschool programs).** Why is this important? Most low-performing schools are not aligning current resources with student needs. Adding programmatic dollars without fundamentally changing the underlying structures limits both the effectiveness and the sustainability of turnaround efforts.	1. All or most turnaround support is devoted to separate add-on programs. 2. Turnaround support is a combination of program-based and restructuring-focused. 3. Turnaround support is provided as part of an integrated restructuring process.

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)	
6. The district has clear performance standards for turnaround schools and school leaders and tangible consequences for both meeting/exceeding and falling short of those standards. Why is this important? Additional resources and flexibility for schools and school resources must be accompanied by clear goals and both positive and negative consequences to hold schools and staff accountable for results.	1. The district has no clear performance standards for turnaround schools. 2. The district has established standards for turnaround schools but the consequences of meeting or not meeting those standards are not clear. 3. The district has clear performance standards for turnaround schools and consequences of performance are well understood and enforced.	**POINTS:** _____

WHAT ARE THE RIGHT INTERVENTIONS? Does your district invest first in mission-critical areas?

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)	
1. The district has an effective method for placing high-capacity principals in turnaround schools. Why is this important? Turnaround schools require a high-capacity leader who can develop an instructional vision and structure the school's people, time, and money to support that vision. It is nearly impossible to turn around a persistently low-performing school without a top-notch leader.	1. The district does not have an effective method for placing high-capacity principals in turnaround schools. 2. The district has incentives to attract principals to turnaround schools but does not actively pursue the highest performers. 3. The district identifies its highest-performing principals and actively recruits them to turnaround schools and/or targets top performers from outside the district.	**POINTS:** _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT

		Current practice in your district (circle best answer)
POINTS: _____	**2. The district provides incentives to teachers to work in turnaround schools.** Why is this important? The most effective staff serves a low-performing school voluntarily. Incentives are used to acknowledge the challenges of working in a turnaround school and reward teachers for taking on this difficult assignment.	1. The district does not provide teacher incentives for working in turnaround schools. 2. The district has some incentives in place but they are not adequate to attract and retain the needed staff at turnaround schools. 3. The district has effective incentives to attract and retain high-performing teachers at turnaround schools.
POINTS: _____	**3. Principals have the authority to choose teachers based on the fit of their skills and expertise with school and student needs.** Why is this important? To effectively match teaching staff with school and student needs, principals need the ability to choose the teachers that will best meet the needs of their student population and complement the skills and experience of current faculty members. Collective bargaining agreements that require seniority be the primary driver of hiring and transfer decisions, as well as other district practices, can limit principals' flexibility in hiring the right staff to meet their needs.	1. Principals must first fill open positions based on seniority or other transfer policies. 2. Some principals may choose teachers based on fit and need. 3. All principals may choose teachers based on fit and need and work closely with human resources to ensure they have access to the right candidates.
POINTS: _____	**4. Turnaround schools have support for removing low-performing teachers.** Why is this important? A small number of severely underperforming or disruptive teachers can have a profoundly negative effect on school culture and performance. To succeed, turnaround schools must have some flexibility in removing their worst performers. Some of these teachers may just be a poor fit at the school and can succeed at a different school, others may need to be counseled out of the district.	1. There is not an effective process for removing low-performing teachers from turnaround schools. 2. There is an effective process for transferring low-performing teachers from turnaround schools to other schools. 3. There is an effective process for transferring low-performing teachers from turnaround schools and removing them from the district if appropriate.

	Current practice in your district (circle best answer)	
5. Most specialist teachers (e.g., special education, ELL) at turnaround schools are certified in core academic subject areas as well. Why is this important? Specialist teachers shoulder a significant amount of the instructional burden in schools with high populations of special-needs students. If specialist teachers are not qualified, the quality of their instruction is likely to be lower and struggling students will fall even further behind.	1. Most specialist teachers are not subject certified. 2. Some or most specialist teachers are subject certified. 3. All specialist teachers are subject certified.	**POINTS:** _____
6. Turnaround schools have high-quality formative assessments that provide ongoing information on student achievement. Why is this important? Teachers need timely, accurate student data to adjust instruction to meet student needs. Many teachers are likely to need support in using formative assessments as part of class work, using the data to understand student learning needs, and then adjusting instruction accordingly.	1. Schools do not have effective formative assessments. 2. Schools have and use effective formative assessments for some subjects and grades. 3. Schools have and use effective formative assessments for all subjects and grades.	**POINTS:** _____
7. Teachers in turnaround schools are provided with at least 90 minutes of collaborative planning time (CPT) per week, during which they have expert support, work with formative assessments, and collaborate with colleagues in their subject area and grade. Why is this important? To improve instruction and adjust instruction to meet student needs, teachers need to have at least 90 minutes of time together each week. During this time they work with a coach or other expert to examine formative assessment data and to continuously adjust instruction based on that data to improve results.	1. Teachers do not have at least 90 minutes of CPT per week. 2. Teachers have at least 90 minutes of CPT per week but do not have expert support in using student performance data to adjust instruction. 3. Teachers have 90 or more minutes of CPT per week with a teacher leader or instructional coach and use this time to review student performance data and adjust instruction.	**POINTS:** _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT

		Current practice in your district (circle best answer)
POINTS: _____	**8. The district provides additional health, social, and emotional support to students in a variety of at-risk categories.** Why is this important? At-risk students — those with one or more risk factors, including poverty, foster care, or special needs — cannot succeed academically without health, social, and emotional support to ensure that they are ready and able to learn. Low-performing schools often have high concentrations of at-risk students and therefore need additional resources to support the acute needs of this population.	1. The district does not provide additional non-academic support for at-risk students. 2. Nonacademic support is provided for at-risk students through standalone programs. 3. Nonacademic support for at-risk students is integrated with overall instruction.
POINTS: _____	**9. School supervisors for turnaround schools have reduced spans of control and provide differentiated levels of support to schools based on performance level.** Why is this important? School supervisors for turnaround schools must have the time to understand each school's needs, work intensively with the principal to develop a turnaround strategy, and help secure the support the school needs from other central office departments (e.g., human resources). It is only possible for a supervisor to play these roles effectively if he or she is responsible for only a small number of turnaround schools.	1. School supervisors with responsibility for turnaround schools do not have reduced spans of control. 2. School supervisors with responsibility for turnaround schools have slightly reduced spans of control. 3. School supervisors with responsibility for turnaround schools have significantly reduced spans of control.

Summary Sheet with Scores

ADD UP YOUR SCORE

WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL NEED?	POINTS
1. Student needs	_____
2. Highest-needs populations	_____
3. Principal evaluation	_____
4. Teacher evaluation	_____
5. School practice	_____
Total Section Score (Max 15)	_____

WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL GET?	POINTS
1. Funding for student needs	_____
2. Current funding levels	_____
3. Class size, teacher loads	_____
4. Instructional time	_____
5. Extended learning time	_____
6. Individualized instruction	_____
Total Section Score (Max 18)	_____

HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR STRATEGY?	POINTS
1. School performance	_____
2. Turnaround strategy	_____
3. Strategy components	_____
4. Federal intervention strategy	_____
5. Change in structure	_____
6. Accountability	_____
Total Section Score (Max 18)	_____

WHAT ARE THE RIGHT INTERVENTIONS?	POINTS
1. Principal assignment	_____
2. Teacher incentives	_____
3. Principal authority	_____
4. Low-performing teachers	_____
5. Teacher certification	_____
6. Formative assessments	_____
7. Collaborative planning time	_____
8. Support for at-risk students	_____
9. Span of control	_____
Total Section Score (Max 27)	_____
TOTAL SCORE (Max 78)	_____

To break the cycle of failure, schools need radical changes that address the root causes of their pervasive performance problems.

GETTING STARTED

DISTRICTS GENERALLY HAVE failed to recognize that persistently low-performing schools have a unique set of needs and challenges that require aggressive, customized and sustained interventions. Instead, districts create one-size-fits-all intervention programs, with each target school receiving the same additional dollars, number of instructional coaches, or other additional support. In some cases, districts may add resources without addressing flaws in the underlying structures of the schools. The result is often a mix of standalone, add-on programs.

Turnaround strategies are often stopgap measures — rarely developed as part of a district-wide strategy for supporting and rewarding school improvement. A school that is moving in the right direction may lose all of its extra resources once it improves a bit and moves out of turnaround status, even though its population remains just as needy. Most turnaround schools need a sustained higher level of resources and different kinds of support to meet the needs of their high-needs populations and continue to improve.

We now have significant research on what high-performing schools do to generate and sustain improvement.[1] Many districts have codified this research into standards for and assessments of school practice that serve as the basis for school improvement. These lists tend to look similar across districts and include such essential elements as rigorous and engaging curriculum and data-informed instruction and assessments that align with state standards; transformational leaders who build effective teaching teams; effective teachers in every classroom; expertise and strategies to respond to individual needs of all students (e.g., gifted, ELL, special education, and struggling learners); a safe, welcoming learning environment; resources and organization that match student and school needs; and parent and community partnerships.

Any district turnaround strategy must address each of these essentials; in fact, districts should address these elements in all schools, even if they are not low performing. But the schools targeted as turnaround — the schools that struggle the most — are faced with a set of particularly difficult and pressing challenges that set them apart. As a result, the above elements alone are not enough. **To break the cycle of failure, schools need to address the root causes of their pervasive performance problems.** (See the illustration on the next page.)

1 Miles, K.H. and Frank, S. (2008). *The Strategic School: Making the Most of People, Time, and Money.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

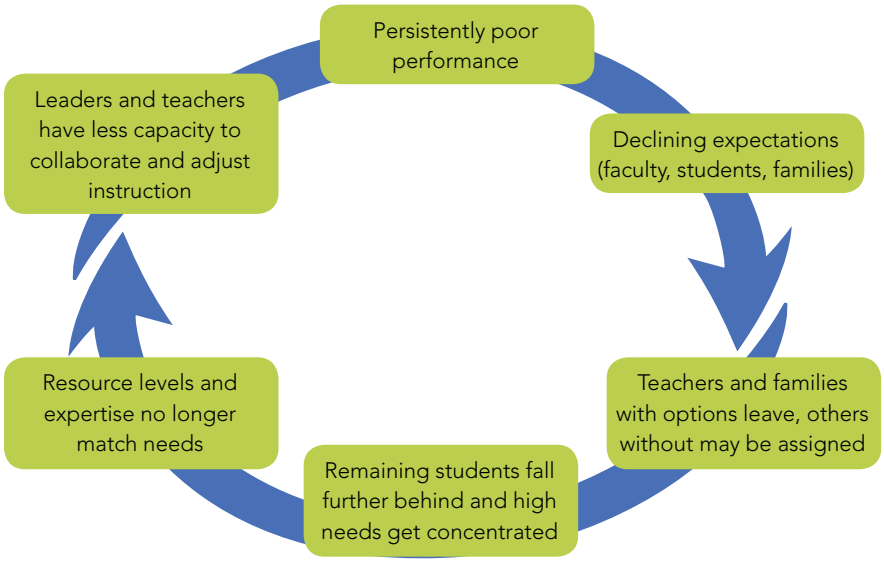
Marzano, R.J. (2003). *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Hanushek, E. (1997). "Assessing the Effects of School Resources on Student Performance. An update." *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* 19, p. 141–164; ii.

Newman, F.; Smith, B.; Allensworth, E.; and Bryk, A.S. (2001). *School Instructional Program Coherence: Benefits and Challenges.* Chicago: Chicago Consortium on School Research.

Shields, R.A. and Miles, K.H. (2008). *Strategic Designs: Lessons from Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools.* Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.

Successful Turnarounds Break the Cycle of Failure



Ongoing poor performance leads to declining expectations for student achievement throughout the school community. As the culture degrades, families and staff who have the option of moving to a different school depart, leaving behind the students and often the teachers with the lowest capacity and highest needs. In most cases, the school is then faced with the same resources, less staff capacity, and a higher-needs student population. Staff is overwhelmed, and without support and intervention, performance continues to decline.

All interventions are not created equal

As districts develop their school-specific support strategies, the order and relative investment size of the interventions are key. We have identified mission-critical interventions that should be first priority for school turnaround, as well as interventions that are important but only effective if the mission-critical elements are in place. A third category of interventions includes those that admittedly are low leverage.

- **Mission critical:** *The first priority intervention of any district turnaround program must be to increase teacher and leader capacity.* Without this foundation, any additional investments cannot return the results that students in these schools so desperately need. Districts must ensure that each turnaround school has a transformational leader and a team of high-capacity teachers who can create a culture of achievement and work together to continuously improve instruction based on student results.

  Because low-performing schools have high populations of at-risk students — students who face tremendous challenges to academic success due to external factors — districts also must provide the appropriate social, emotional, and health support to ensure that these students are ready and able to learn.

- **Important, but . . .** Students who have fallen far behind their peers need the most help and the strongest interventions. Successful turnaround depends on providing enough time and support for these students to make up ground, but only *after* districts have ensured that schools have strong leadership and instructional staff offering the support students need to succeed. For example, spending to extend the school day to provide

additional support for students two to three years behind grade level can be valuable — *but only if the school already has a teacher corps with the capacity, time, curriculum, and instructional practices to use that extra time effectively.*

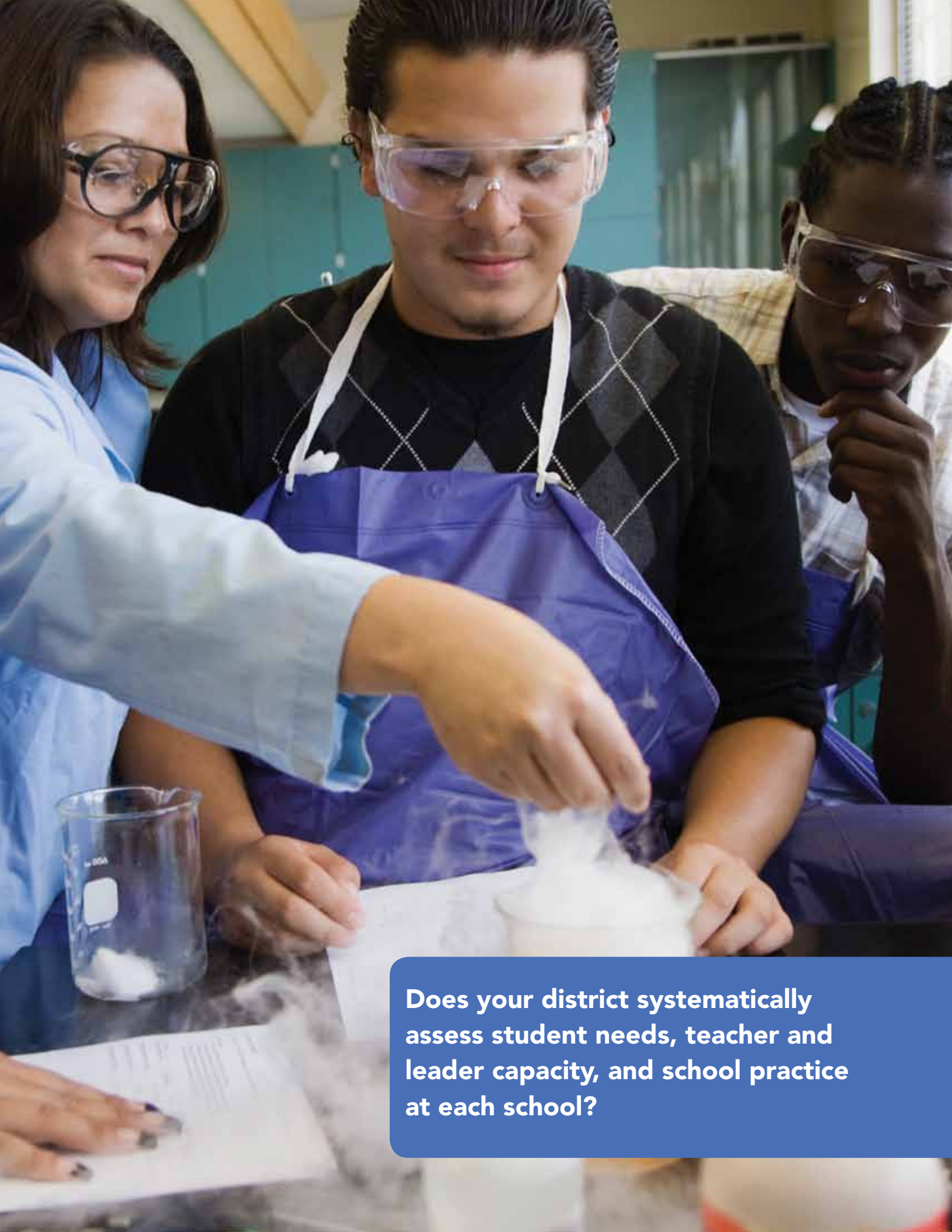
Districts also must provide additional central support and accountability to these schools so that schools receive the resources and direction they need. These schools need intensive problem-solving support as well as help from other central functions, such as human resources and special education, to make the radical changes needed in school structure, staffing, and instruction.

- **Low leverage:** Many common turnaround investments have not demonstrated the same sustainable impact relative to their costs as the areas outlined above. These areas include standalone tutoring programs, extra time after school that is not integrated with core instruction, and across-the-board class size reductions. They should be approached with caution and funded only if additional resources are available.

Once you have an idea from the Self-Assessment about how your current district practice stacks up, you can move forward to develop a bold action plan to approach turnaround.

We have used school improvement data from 13 school districts to illustrate funding and spending patterns. Generally, the charts in this report reflect data from Achievement Zone or Superintendent's Zone programs that appear to be generating positive results.[2] In some cases where Turnaround Zone data are not available, school performance category is used as a proxy for the likelihood the school will be targeted for turnaround.

2 Schools designated as Achievement Zone or Superintendent's Zone schools are typically identified based on chronically poor performance and receive additional resources and support.



Does your district systematically assess student needs, teacher and leader capacity, and school practice at each school?

1. WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL NEED?

THE PROBLEM: Most districts do not have effective systems in place to accurately evaluate the performance and needs of each of their schools and then to match funding and support effectively to meet those needs.

THE SOLUTION: Before launching turnaround efforts, districts must create systems to assess student needs, teacher and leader capacity, and school practices and conditions at all schools.

A successful school turnaround program needs to fit into an overall district reform strategy. Without systemic change, the fundamental forces that allowed these schools to underperform will remain unchanged and sustainable improvement will be impossible. Turnaround efforts should be aligned with the goals of the district as a whole. Schools targeted for turnaround — the lowest-performing schools in the district — clearly will need additional support to achieve those goals. An overall framework will help districts decide which turnaround model makes sense for each school and how to redirect resources to support its implementation. The framework must begin with a systematic assessment of each school's needs — student needs, staff capacity, and school practices — and how schools are evolving as intervention strategies take hold.

A systematic assessment is not what districts typically do — they do not fully understand how resources are spent; they do not have data systems in place to continually assess student and teacher needs and to get that information quickly to teachers and principals; and they do not require or train teachers and leaders to match resources specifically to those needs. All too often districts develop one-size-fits-all intervention programs, with all target schools receiving the same additional dollars, number of instructional coaches, or other additional support. This does not work; *needs are different from school to school and even from classroom to classroom*. Sometimes districts do try to tailor interventions but they do so without systematically gathering and analyzing the data necessary to accurately assess these needs. The result often is a mix of standalone, add-on programs that are each assigned to schools separately — the combination of which may not be strategic or meet school needs.

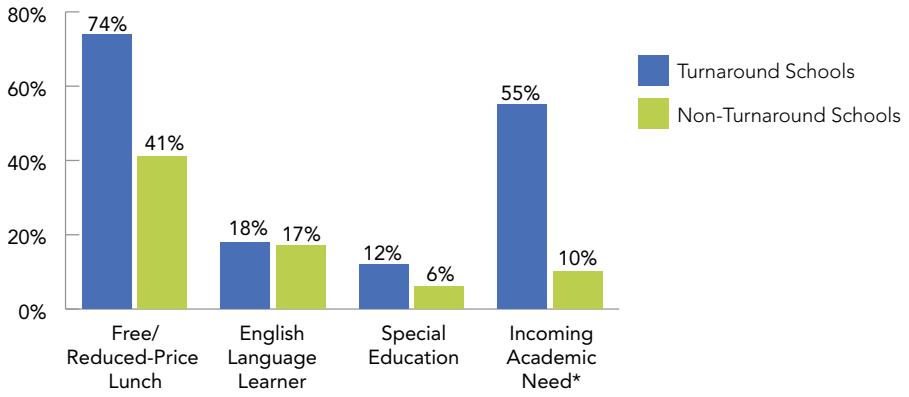
Student needs

Districts need to fully understand which students attend each school and the needs of those individual students. In addition, districts need to look at their student assignment policies to ensure that the highest-needs students are not unduly and inadvertently concentrated in turnaround schools. The challenges of a particularly high-needs student population can be exacerbated if districts are not mindful about these policies, which can either support or undermine turnaround efforts.

In one district, turnaround schools have almost twice the population of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and special education students and five times as many incoming students below proficient in math as non-turnaround schools.

Not surprisingly, turnaround schools generally have a disproportionate share of high-needs students compared to other schools in the district. **Figure 1** illustrates this situation in one urban district. In this case, turnaround high schools have almost twice the population of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch and special education students and five times as many incoming students below proficient in math as non-turnaround schools. If we drill down into the special education population even further, we find that only half (51%) of special education students in turnaround schools can be served in a resource or inclusion environment, while nearly two-thirds (63%) of students in non-turnaround schools are being served this way. A school with a disproportionate share of higher-needs students, *without additional resources and support to meet those needs,* is set up for failure.

Figure 1: Student Needs in Turnaround versus Non-Turnaround Schools



**Academic need defined as percentage of tested students who performed below proficient in end-of-grade 8 math exam*

In addition, these schools may be caught in a cycle that is hard to break: If general education teachers have large classes with high percentages of high-needs students and are not receiving the support they need to handle these challenging classes, they may be over-diagnosing students into special education, increasing the cost to serve them and pulling more resources away from the general population. Because it is difficult for districts to find and hire highly qualified special education teachers, especially those who also are certified to teach core academics, students may not receive the instruction they need and have an even harder time catching up. We have seen this situation frequently in urban school districts and know that students rarely demonstrate higher achievement under these conditions.

Districts must design any turnaround strategy to meet the needs of the *particular students in that school*. Because turnaround schools often have a higher percentage of high-needs students than other schools in the district, districts should look carefully at why and determine whether they want to try to change the student population in those schools, provide additional resources, or both. Schools with significant populations of students in any of these high-needs categories will require additional resources to meet their students' needs and accelerate their learning. In some cases, the best option for the students and teachers will be to maintain the student population as it is and provide significant additional resources to meet its needs. Other times, however, the district may want to explore reassigning students to change the mix of students in the school.

Questions to Consider

1. Do you have a good understanding of student needs in low-performing schools?
2. Are there unusually high concentrations of high-needs students in the schools your district has targeted for turnaround?
3. Are there options for reducing this concentration, adding resources to support these higher-needs students, or both?
4. Are any of your turnaround schools so underenrolled or under-requested that you should consider closing the school or reconstituting the student population?

Take Action!

- **Systematically assess the student population at each school and compare it across schools.** The first step is to develop an accurate picture of who attends each school and what their needs are. Be sure to have the data you need to understand how many students in each school are enrolled in special education, are ELL students, are off track or struggling academically, or are at-risk students due to external factors, such as poverty.

- **Examine assignment policies and program placement decisions to ensure that high-needs students are not inadvertently concentrated at struggling schools.** Districts that have flexibility in placement for ELL students and students with disabilities can work to ensure that these students are spread out across a number of schools or to concentrate them in a few schools, building extensive support structures to serve these populations effectively without unnecessarily draining resources from the overall instructional program. The high-fixed cost structures and restrictive regulations associated with serving populations of very high-needs students often make it expensive to serve them well when relatively small numbers of these students are in many schools. Students with very specialized needs actually may be best served when they are grouped together in a few schools — districts need fewer highly qualified special education and ELL teachers, who are difficult to find. But again, that this strategy will work only if schools with high concentrations of these students receive sufficient additional resources to meet their needs on an ongoing basis.

- **Develop intervention approaches beyond special education for students who are struggling academically.** Districts may be able to redirect resources by identifying struggling learners who would benefit from receiving extra help without being placed in special education, and by serving students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment allowable that meets their needs. A careful revision of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) often can help teachers and principals develop more cost-effective plans to keep students in regular classrooms with teachers who have greater content expertise. Some of these resources can go toward supporting core academic teachers in best serving their struggling learners. This approach can keep resources focused on students who need them, but also allow teachers to meet and adapt to the changing needs of the students. The approach also can limit the number of students assigned to special education programs in which teachers often lack certification to teach core academics but are often expected to teach multiple subjects and have limited capacity to help students accelerate their learning and catch up.

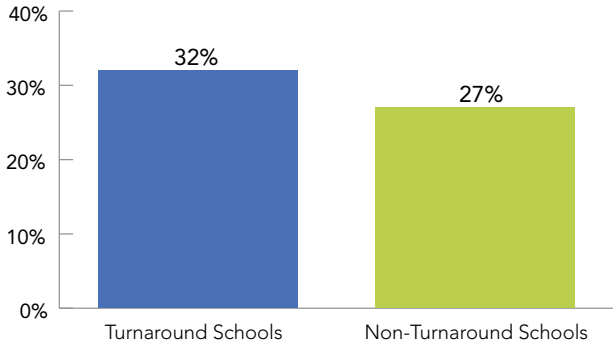
- **Make student placement more strategic for students with highly specialized program needs.** Even after the careful review described above, some students will still need access to specialized programs and instruction, which experts in special education provide best. If these programs are concentrated in turnaround schools that already face significant performance challenges, you may want to consider moving students to a higher-capacity school.

- **Consider funding incentives for schools to effectively serve high-needs students based on performance rather than diagnosis.** Some schools — particularly those with strong principals and teachers — are highly successful at working with a high-needs population and raising the students' academic achievement. Districts should consider intentionally supporting these principals and teachers and ensuring that they have the resources necessary to support their work with an entire population of high-needs students. For instance, districts can rework funding formulas to give additional weight to students who enter school far behind grade level and to give the school extra resources to serve those students — rather than waiting to bring in additional resources after students are assigned to special education.

School leader and teacher capacity

Districts must ensure that the principals and teachers at turnaround schools have the skills and capacity to create a culture of change and meet the needs of their students. Chronically underperforming schools are notoriously difficult to staff. Because many districts fill open positions based on seniority, more experienced teachers often choose to move to higher-performing schools. In addition, teachers in low-performing schools do not always receive the support they need and are quick to leave when the opportunity arises. The result is a high number of new or inexperienced teachers and a large amount of staff churn at these schools, which exacerbates the problem.

Figure 2: Incidence of New Teachers* in Turnaround and Non-Turnaround Schools



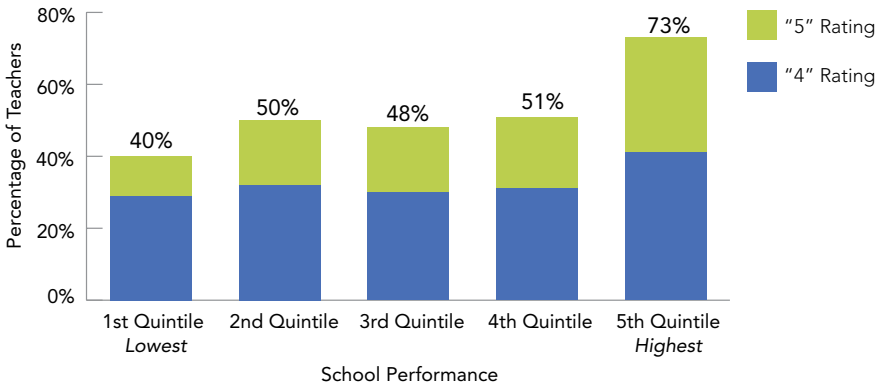
New teacher defined as having three years experience or less

Almost one-third of teachers in turnaround schools are new to teaching, compared to just over a quarter in other schools. **Figure 2** illustrates the number of teachers who are new to teaching (fewer than three years experience) at turnaround schools in one urban district relative to the rest of the district. As teachers leave, even more new teachers come to the school. In three of the 10 turnaround schools in this district, *more than half* of the teaching staff was either new to teaching or new to the school. This instability in staff decreases instructional effectiveness. Teachers generally are less effective in their first three years of teaching and high turnover hinders efforts to create a culture of achievement and collaboration among staff and to provide training and professional development to support school improvement efforts.

Almost one-third of teachers in turnaround schools in this district were new to teaching, compared to just over a quarter in other schools. In three of the 10 turnaround schools in the district, *more than half* of the teaching staff was either new to teaching or new to the school.

The highest-rated teachers are disproportionately working in schools with lower needs. In one district, only 40% of teachers in the worst-performing schools were given either a 4 or a 5 performance rating, compared to 73% of teachers in the top tier of schools.

Figure 3: Distribution of High-Performing Teachers by School Performance



In addition, the highest-rated teachers are disproportionately working in schools with lower needs. **Figure 3** illustrates the disparity in the number of top-rated teachers in high-performing schools versus other schools. In this district, only 40% of teachers in the worst-performing schools were given either a 4 or a 5 performance rating, compared to 73% of teachers in the top tier of schools. If these schools were higher performing as a result of their talented faculty, these statistics would not be of concern. Generally, however, the schools in the top tier have student populations with much lower levels of need — they typically do not serve as many poor students, students with special needs, or ELL students as the schools in the lowest tier. Thus, more senior teachers who have more choice about where they work choose the schools with easier-to-teach students rather than challenging student populations.

Districts need a process for assessing the performance and capacity of the principal, teachers, and other leadership (e.g., assistant principal, lead teachers) and for ensuring that the staff can and do meet the needs of struggling students. If turnaround is to be successful and sustainable, districts must either give teachers and principals the support they need or replace them if they cannot meet students' needs.

Questions to Consider

1. Are new teachers concentrated in the schools you are targeting for turnaround?
2. How are the district's higher-performing and expert teachers distributed across schools?
3. Do the schools targeted for turnaround have sufficient expert teachers to lead teams in improving performance?
4. Is there high staff turnover in the schools you are targeting for turnaround?
5. What type of supports (e.g., lead teachers/coaches, other mentoring or professional development) could help reduce instability and build teacher capacity at these schools?
6. Are there specific subjects (e.g., math, science) or specialties (e.g., special education) where teaching staff instability is higher than others?
7. How can you attract and retain high-quality teachers to these schools?

Take Action!

- **Assess and systematically review the performance and potential of school leaders to ensure needed expertise and experience.** Surprisingly, many districts assign novice principals to lead the lowest-performing schools. Research suggests that leading a school turnaround requires a deep understanding of how to generate instructional improvement, catalyze change, create powerful teams, and more. These skills are not likely to be found in brand-new principals. Even successful principals in schools with a long history of strong performance may not have the needed skills for turnaround. The first step for districts will be to use the best available data combined with the professional judgment of those who supervise principals to highlight the strongest performers and assess whether principals of the lowest-performing schools have the necessary skills for the job.

- **Assess teaching capacity using the best available data.** Most districts do not systematically track data on individual teacher performance, skills, and contribution at the school level. Most principals give most teachers satisfactory or higher ratings, even though many acknowledge that they have low performers on their staff. And most existing teacher evaluation systems do not provide nuanced information about performance and skills. While districts work to fix this they must still make the best of the information they have to ensure that schools in trouble have teachers that can dramatically improve student performance. You can and should move quickly to gather data, such as the number of novice teachers per school, how many teachers have lead teacher/expert status, student value-added scores, evaluation ratings, observation scores, parent evaluation, and teacher absences, and look at this information teacher by teacher and school by school. These data can form the basis for discussions between principals and district supervisors and, combined with their professional judgment, can lead to sound decisions about teacher performance and capacity and how they need to be improved.

- **Build the pipeline of turnaround-ready principals and expert teachers.** The success of turnaround efforts rests on the shoulders of highly capable teachers and principals. Step up recruiting and overhaul training and support to do whatever it takes to attract, recruit, train, develop, and retain high-performing teachers and principals to these schools. Part of this effort involves finding top performers and bringing them into the district; some districts have created their own pipeline programs to recruit and develop principals and teachers from outside the district and from untraditional sources. But it also is crucial to focus resources on developing the capacity of principals and teachers already in the district. Independent organizations, such as The New Teacher Project and New Leaders for New Schools, can help you develop strategies to improve capacity; strategies may include mentoring, intensive professional development, and other supports.

- **Provide extra resources to schools based on the number of novice teachers they have.** Because most districts budget using average, not actual, salaries, schools that have unusually high concentrations of novice teachers actually spend less per pupil than other schools. Unfortunately, turnaround schools are often the schools with the most inexperienced teachers. These teachers need extra support and coaching, which can be hard to come by in turnaround schools. An equitable district turnaround strategy will ensure that schools with high percentages of novice teachers have the resources to compensate for teacher inexperience and that principals can create plans to fit their own school needs to support teachers in effectively improving student performance.

School practices

Once districts have a clear understanding of students' needs and the skills and capacity of the teachers and principals in each turnaround school, they need to assess what is working and what is not. Even the lowest-performing schools may already be on a trajectory for improvement and need some incremental support to continue progressing. Other schools will need more fundamental support to develop a clear instructional vision and a plan for overhauling school practices to support that vision before they can figure out how to use additional resources effectively. All turnaround schools are not the same — each one can be turned around only with targeted support to meet its unique situation.

Figure 4: Essential School Practices in Turnaround Schools

Turnaround School	Accountability	Culture, Teamwork, Vision	Strong School Leaders	Strong Teachers	Focus on Instruction	Social and Emotional Support for Students	Family Engagement
School 1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 5	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 6	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●
School 7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 8	●	●	●	●	●	●	N/A
School 9	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● High Need ● Mid Need ● Low Need

Figure 4 illustrates a potential evaluation mechanism that one urban district is considering for use with its lowest-performing schools. Essential school practices that the district has identified are listed across the top; the district will evaluate each school to determine whether it needs significant improvement in a particular area or is performing well and needs less improvement. The list of success factors will vary somewhat by district but should include, at a minimum, the factors listed here.

Questions to Consider

1. Has your district defined school essentials around school practice for low-performing schools?
2. Have you systematically evaluated each school relative to these essentials?
3. Are there significant variations across schools around where they have the highest needs?
4. Are there common needs shared by all schools?

Take Action!

- **Compile data by school on what improvement strategies schools currently have in place to inform turnaround strategy development.** A school-by-school assessment of school practices is a critical input to the development of a school-specific turnaround intervention strategy. This assessment tool should be the same as or an extension of the district's overall accountability framework for schools. For example, many districts, such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg and New York City, have school quality reviews that systematically assess school practice on research-based strategies that lead to high student performance. Others, such as Baltimore City and Cincinnati, have frameworks that define the essentials of high-performing schools that form the basis of their school improvement planning process. Unfortunately, most districts don't use this information in consistent ways or look across schools to understand differences in performance and the support each school needs. Turnaround efforts provide the perfect opportunity for using this data consistently and effectively, if you are not already doing so.

Does your district allocate resources equitably to schools based on need? Do schools use those resources effectively to support instructional goals?

2. WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL GET?

THE PROBLEM: Resources allocated for turnaround typically are spread equally across all schools rather than allocated to each school based on school and student needs. Typically, low-performing schools use resources — talent, time, and money — poorly by using outdated scheduling techniques, offering the wrong mix of courses, and not being strategic about class sizes. As a result, resources are not used in ways that can best serve students who need intensive remediation and acceleration to succeed academically.

THE SOLUTION: Provide adequate and appropriate but not equal resources to turnaround schools based on school and student needs, and align people, time, and money in turnaround schools to support the instructional vision and meet student needs.

Funding levels

Typically, funding and support for low-performing schools is determined by program, not by schools' current resource levels or their specific needs. If funding inequity already exists in the district,[3] this approach perpetuates rather than mitigates the inequity. In addition, some districts allocate a flat dollar amount to each turnaround school regardless of school size or needs. Because the costs of turnaround can vary significantly by the number of students and teachers, this adds to the equity challenge.

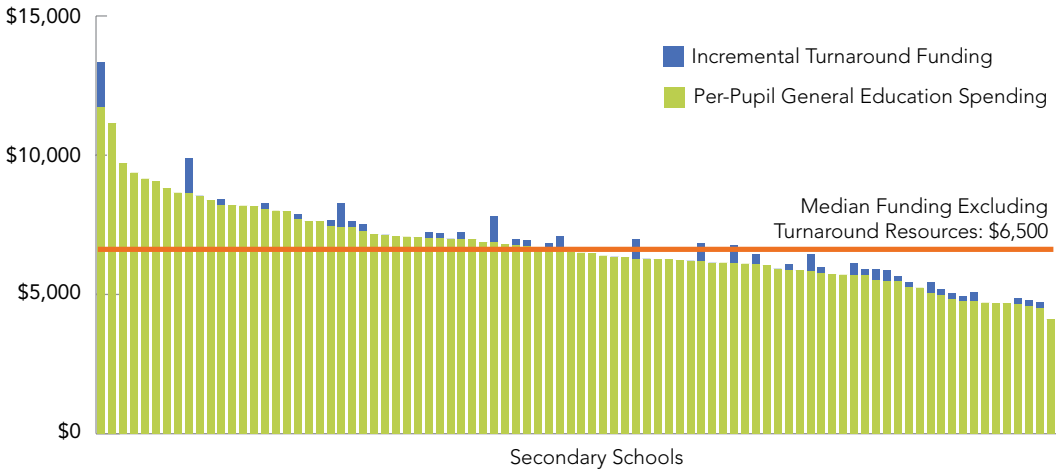
Many urban districts are implementing specific programs, such as Achievement Zones or Superintendents' Zones, targeted at supporting low-performing schools. The programs often are at the centerpiece of applications for federal funding, and many districts currently are refining, expanding, or refocusing these programs or creating new programs to attract some of this funding.

Although temporary turnaround funding can help improve these schools over the short term, that improvement is not sustainable unless the underlying funding (i.e., the funding level schools will receive after they come out of turnaround status) is increased to reflect the needs of the student population. Struggling schools are likely to continue to serve a population with significant needs even after turnaround efforts are over, unless the school is reconstituted. Therefore, a base per-pupil funding level should reflect this high level of need.

Figure 5, on the next page, shows per-pupil spending by school for secondary schools in one large urban district. We have used the relatively simple calculation for general education, school-reported spending per general education student. This measure is limited because it does not reflect special education and English language learner populations nor does it capture school-related expenses reported at the district level, but it is a good starting place for understanding equity. In Figure 5, the green bars represent per-pupil general education spending; the blue bars represent additional funding targeted at turnaround schools.

3 See *School Funding Systems: Equity, Transparency, Flexibility* in this series for more detail.

Figure 5: General Education Spending Per Pupil by School



In this district, schools were already receiving widely varying levels of resources before turnaround funding. Through the turnaround program, some schools were given additional resources without regard to current funding levels. As a result, some lower-funded schools remained at or below the median funding level *even after they received their intervention dollars*, while higher-funded schools received more resources than they already had.

Questions to Consider

❶ Is there significant variation in general education funding per pupil across schools in your district?

❷ What are the current funding levels of the schools you are targeting for turnaround?

❸ What are the implications of those funding levels for how you think about allocating turnaround dollars?

Take Action!

- **Revise the district funding system to increase the amount of need-driven funding going to low-performing schools.** Before allocating turnaround resources, districts need to ensure that their budgeting system is providing an equitable level of resources to each school based on student need. In many districts, the lowest-performing schools receive fewer dollars per pupil than higher-performing schools.[4] To funnel resources toward these schools where they are most needed, consider changing staffing ratios, changing funding weights, or requiring that additional resources go to schools with significant populations of any or all of the four main categories of special-needs students — special education students, ELL students, students receiving free and reduced-price lunch, and incoming students who are off track or struggling academically. This action will help ensure that high-needs schools have the base level of funding — built into district budgets — needed to support their student populations over time. Schools may still benefit from additional turnaround funding, which can allow them to invest in transitioning to better use of resources and implementing turnaround models. When these funds are gone, however, schools will still need the resources to serve their high-needs populations. If base funding levels in these schools do not change, it is likely that once improvement efforts take hold

Use the worksheet on page 68 to calculate per-pupil funding by school.

4 See *School Funding Systems: Equity, Transparency, Flexibility* in this series for more detail.

and student achievement begins to rise, the extra resources will go away and schools will not be able to sustain the improvement. For more information on evaluating and revising your district's funding system, see *School Funding Systems: Equity, Transparency, Flexibility* in this series.

- **Target a total funding level for low-performing schools based on their student and teacher needs so that additional turnaround resources plus current resources are enough to implement a turnaround.** It is very important to document the current level of resources available to each school and to assess what additional resources each school needs to successfully turn around. Calculating the current general education funding per pupil by school in your district, coupled with gathering information about student needs (e.g., proficiency upon entering the school, special education and ELL needs, student mobility, experience level of teachers in the building) by school, can help you target where additional turnaround dollars are most needed. These additional resources will vary from school to school based on current funding levels, school size, and other factors, such as a disproportionate number of novice teachers, which drives per-pupil spending down.

- **Focus federal funding on turnaround schools.** The first two action steps will help you make better decisions about how to allocate new federal funds. Resist the urge to apply any new funds universally; target them to the schools that need them the most. Spreading resources too thin does very little good anywhere.

  The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Title 1 School Improvement Grants (SIG) are intended to fund turnaround at persistently lowest-performing schools. The SIG program and other federal competitive grant programs strongly urge states and districts to focus resources where they are most needed, making sure these resources actually help bring about sustained turnaround. When you apply to your state for these funds, make a strong and clear case for how much funding — short term and long term — each of these schools will need to implement and sustain turnaround. Because many of the schools are located in areas with high-needs student populations, it is critical to ensure that the schools will continue to receive funding commensurate with student needs in addition to transition-driven turnaround funding, even after they have emerged from turnaround status.

- **When cutting budgets, preserve or even increase funding for the lowest-performing schools and cut elsewhere.** Be strategic about budget cuts. Across-the-board cuts invariably hurt the neediest schools and students the most.

Be strategic about budget cuts. Across-the-board cuts invariably hurt the neediest schools and students the most.

Use of available resources: Talent, time, and technology

How schools use their people and time to support their instructional goals is as important as how much funding they receive. Traditional structures and organizational patterns remain the rule in most schools and drive how schools use their resources. In typical elementary schools, one teacher teaches a class of 20 to 30 students, and students receive specialty subject instruction (e.g., physical education, art) in those same groups of 20 to 30. Secondary school models usually have teachers teaching five classes of equal size each day. The school day is broken into six- or seven-period schedules in which each period is the same length of time and one period per day is devoted to each subject. As a result, the average high-school student spends approximately 15 to 17 percent of his or her day in English language arts and the same in math. When students are significantly behind grade level, as is the case in many turnaround schools, this traditional design results in a severe under-investment of time and attention in core subjects for students who need the most time and attention.

Class size

Class size is one example of less-than-ideal resource use. Many states and districts have invested huge sums of money in across-the-board class size reductions in low-performing schools. However, no research suggests that universal class size reduction is the best use of resources. In fact, research shows that incremental reductions in class size, say from 26 to 23, do not generally lead to performance gains; only radical reductions to classes of 16 or smaller have been statistically linked to student performance gains, primarily in the early grades. Rather than hiring more teachers to staff smaller classes in districts already struggling to find enough good teachers, and then allocating additional resources to train and support these teachers, a better strategy may be to recruit and retain fewer high-quality teachers. These teachers will be skilled enough to teach larger classes but create smaller groupings throughout the day to support students who need help and to provide better overall instruction to all students. Districts can invest resources saved by not reducing class size in better support and compensation for all teachers, improving the quality of teaching over time.

Many states and districts have invested huge sums of money in across-the-board class size reductions in low-performing schools. However, no research suggests that universal class size reduction is the best use of resources.

Figure 6: Elementary School Class Size in Turnaround versus Non-Turnaround Schools

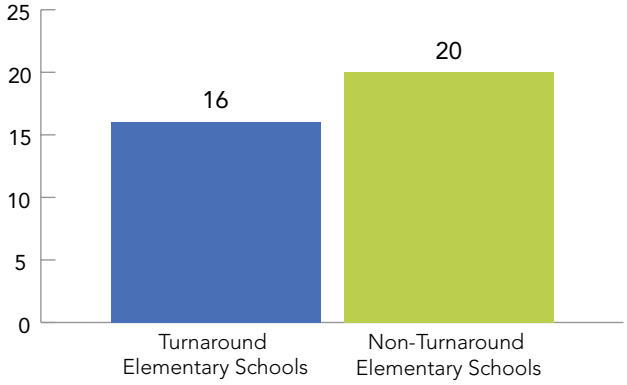


Figure 6 illustrates the average elementary class size in turnaround schools relative to the district average in one urban district. In this case, the district's decision to reduce class size by more than three students on average in low-performing schools resulted in an increase of almost 15% in the number of teachers required and in corresponding instructional and training expense. Because teachers in low-performing schools face such challenging circumstances, these dollars might have been better spent by providing support to teachers already in the building in the form of collaborative planning time and expert help from coaches or master teachers.

In secondary schools, class sizes and teacher loads tend to be larger for core academic subjects and for lower grades than they are for higher grades and high-level electives. This is driven by the fact that core academic subjects are required, especially in lower grades, whereas electives are optional. Declining enrollment in higher grades as students drop out also may drive the variation. The result, although not intentional, is a much higher investment in lower-needs courses and students and a corresponding lower investment in high-needs courses and students.

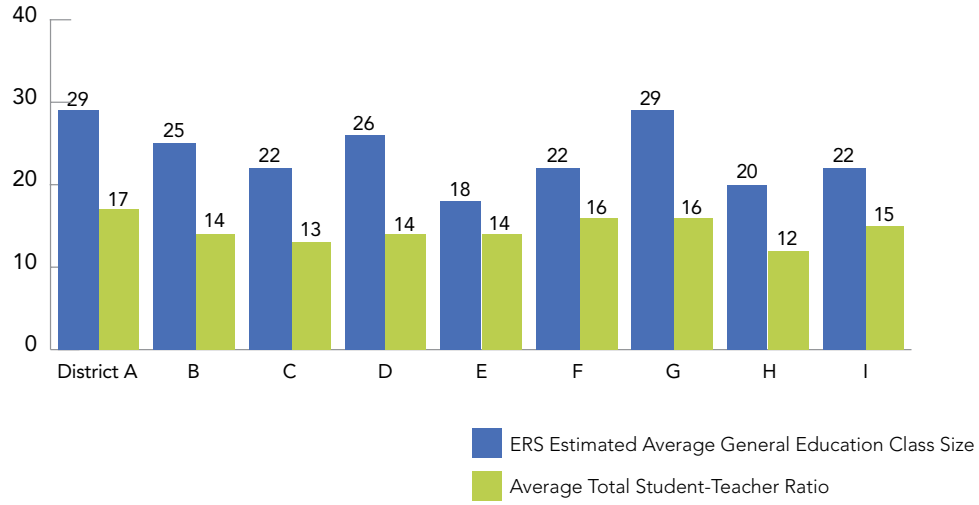
Figure 7: Secondary School Class Size in Core and Noncore Subjects

**Core class defined as English language arts, math, science, social studies; noncore defined as art, computer literacy, vocational, foreign language (excludes physical education)*

Figure 7 illustrates the differences in two typical urban districts between 9th grade core academic class sizes (English language arts, math, science, and social studies) and 12th grade noncore class sizes (all other, excluding physical education). In both cases, the districts are investing *fewer* teaching resources in supporting *higher-needs* students — 9th graders in key subjects. This is just the opposite of what you would do if you set out to focus instructional resources on the areas of highest need. We recommend that you figure out the relative level of investment in core classes versus noncore classes at your turnaround schools. Although it can be complex to calculate class size averages across an entire district as shown here, we provide a simple method for calculating these figures for each of your turnaround schools in the Do-It-Yourself Worksheets section.

Underperforming schools typically give their struggling students additional support through a special program — most often special education and/or ELL programs. These programs require specially certified teachers and this approach results in a high number of specialty teachers who often do not support the majority of students. Special education teachers bring critical skills to diagnosing and responding to individual learning challenges but they may lack expertise in the many subject areas for which they are expected to provide instruction. There may be more effective and more cost-effective approaches to providing *academic* support, particularly early intervention support, to struggling learners. To understand how many teaching resources are tied up in specialist positions, it is helpful to look at the average class size relative to the student-teacher ratio, illustrated by **Figure 8** on the next page.

Figure 8: General Education Class Size Relative to Student-Teacher Ratios*



The student-teacher ratio represents the number of teachers in the school relative to enrollment. The larger the difference between this figure and the average class size, the more teachers there are who are not regular classroom teachers. (Part of this discrepancy will be driven by teacher planning time; in these and other cases we have studied, however, this has a relatively minor component.) A large differential means potential opportunities to redirect specialty staff positions to provide intensive support in core academics and to better support instructional improvement for all students, including those with special needs.

Instructional time

Many turnaround programs expand learning time by lengthening the school day, the school year, or both. Because so many students in these schools are so far behind, adding instructional time to help them catch up can be critical. **However, before investing in additional instructional time, districts should ensure the following:**

- **High-quality school leaders and high-quality teams of teachers are in place to ensure that the school uses additional time effectively.**
- **The school is maximizing the use of existing time for instruction, especially in core academic subjects.**
- **The school will integrate the additional time with existing instruction.**

Figure 9: Total Instructional Time

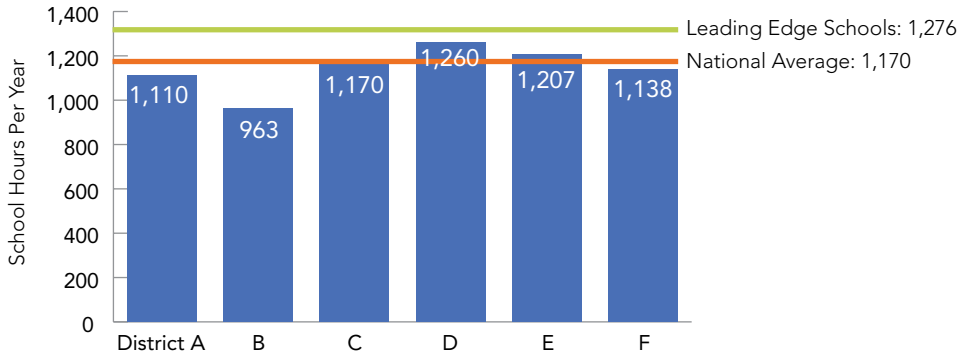


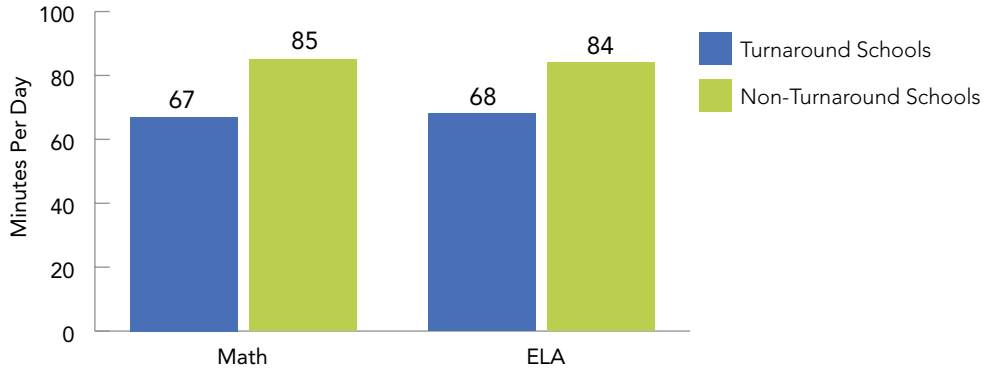
Figure 9 illustrates the total instructional hours (length of school day multiplied by number of school days) across six urban districts relative to the national average of 1,170 hours (180 days, 6.5 hours per day) and the average for leading edge schools. On average, these high-performing schools spend 106 more hours per year on instruction than the national average.[5] If schools in your district have fewer than 1,170 instructional hours per year and if these schools meet the conditions outlined on the previous page, you should consider investing to increase the length of the school day or year in turnaround schools.

It is critical for schools to make the best use of the time they do have in a school day or school year. Most schools do not provide more time for math and English language arts than for other subjects — not even for struggling students. In some districts, low-performing schools actually invest less time in core subjects than their higher-performing counterparts. Typical school schedules allocate time equally across all subjects; high-performing schools often lengthen the time for core academics and trim time in electives.[6] For struggling students, this is a key change that can make a big difference.

Figure 10 illustrates this phenomenon for one school district. The chart shows the number of minutes per day that an average student in a turnaround school spends in math and English language arts instruction relative to his or her counterpart in a higher-performing school. The turnaround schools are investing almost 20 minutes per day — almost 60 hours per year — less in math and English language arts than their higher-performing counterparts.

Turnaround schools are investing almost 20 minutes per day — almost 60 hours per year — less in math and English language arts than their higher-performing counterparts.

Figure 10: Instructional Time in Core Subjects*



** Based on average student instructional time of approximately six hours for turnaround and non-turnaround schools*

5 Shields, R.A. and Miles, K.H. (2008). *Strategic Designs: Lessons from Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools.* Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.

6 Ibid.

Questions to Consider

1. Does your district mandate or plan to mandate class size reduction in turnaround schools? If so, can you ensure a highly effective teacher in every classroom, or are there more effective ways to invest in improving instructional quality?
2. Do turnaround schools in your district actively manage class size, use flexible grouping strategies, and increase instructional time for key subjects and struggling students?
3. Are there significant differences between student-teacher ratio and class size in the schools you are targeting for turnaround?
4. Are there steps you can take to give those schools more flexibility to use those positions for core instruction?
5. Do turnaround schools have adequate instructional time to meet student needs?
6. Are turnaround schools scheduling increased instructional time in core academic subjects?

Use worksheets on pages 71–75 to answer these questions.

Take Action!

New staff working within old school models will not succeed. Districts must ensure that the schedules and structures of turnaround schools are changed to give students enough time and attention in core subjects to meet their learning needs. This section offers a short list of the most highly leveraged changes you can make to promote better alignment of school-level resources with improved instruction. For a more complete list of recommended actions, see *Strategic School Design* in this series.

- **Provide best practice strategic design templates.** By providing schools with strategic design templates, your district can lay out a variety of interconnected organizational options that work for a school's unique size, student population, faculty, instructional focus, and availability of resources, within district constraints. These design templates should include master schedules, staffing plans, and budgets and should inform how schools allocate student, teacher, and staff time; how students and teachers are grouped throughout the day to foster collaboration, coaching, and professional development; and how to intensify support for struggling students within and outside the classroom. The power of strategic design templates comes from considering these components *collectively rather than individually.* For example, a school that wishes to emphasize personalized learning environments for its students would consider a combination of influential factors, including how to best group teachers and students for more individualized attention, teacher loads, class sizes, options for small group instruction, tutoring, and the resulting scheduling and full-time equivalent (FTE) requirements. Looping, advisories, and assignment of non-teaching staff also are strategies for forging supportive faculty-student relationships.

- **Train principals in strategic school design.** Principals often are hired because they have been outstanding teachers and are considered strong instructional leaders. They often do not have training or experience in developing a school design, or in creatively using people, time, and money to maximize learning. Training and support targeted at building these skills will increase school leaders' capacity to use their resources for best results. (See Learning More on page 86 of this guide.)

- **Leverage block scheduling to increase time on core subjects.** Traditional six- or seven-period schedules, in which each subject gets a class period of roughly the same size, restrict the amount of time that schools have to invest in core instruction for struggling students. By changing to an eight-period block schedule and double blocking English language arts and/or math, schools can almost double the amount of student time in those subjects and cut teacher loads in half — all at little or no cost and without eliminating other subjects. The table below illustrates how this schedule shift might work. In a six-period schedule, students take six equal blocks, spending approximately 17% of their time on each subject. In an eight-period A/B block schedule, with double blocks for math and English language arts, students are in school for the same amount of time and still take six subjects but spend 25% of their time in math and English language arts in longer blocks, giving teachers more time to cover material in more depth. Another added benefit: This approach reduces the number of students a typical English or math teacher is teaching by 40%, with three sections instead of five, allowing teachers to utilize more intensive assignments and provide more individual attention.

  Scheduling More Time for Core Subjects

	6 PERIODS PER DAY		8 PERIODS PER DAY	
SUBJECT	Periods	% Time	Periods	% Time
English/Reading	1	17%	2	25%
Social Studies	1	17%	1	13%
Math	1	17%	2	25%
Science	1	17%	1	13%
Physical Education	1	17%	1	13%
Elective	1	17%	1	13%

- **Consider a rotating schedule to align time with student and teacher needs.** No rule says that schedules should be the same each day or that they need to rotate every five days. High-performing schools often fine-tune the use of time by creating rotations that last as many as eight days. Students might have the opportunity for sustained work with their English teacher every eight days, long blocks for science every four days, and club meetings during school every eight days. Changing things up in creative ways gives schools more flexibility in how they use instructional time and relieves the restrictions imposed by the number of days in a week or a standard length of a period.

- **Give principals more flexibility in decisionmaking.** To best structure their school to meet the unique needs of their students, turnaround principals need additional flexibility to implement the changes described in this guide. They need authority over hiring decisions and the timing of hiring; they need to be able to trade staff positions for dollars and/or other staff positions; and they need to be able to creatively and dramatically adjust the schedule to increase time on core academics, provide extra instructional time for struggling students, and minimize time spent on nonacademic matters. However, when principals are given additional responsibility and flexibility without support and training to redesign their schools, they often retain old models. Principals need high-quality training on how to redirect their resources and sustain new models. (See Learning More on page 86 of this guide for resources on this topic.)

By changing to an eight-period block schedule and double blocking English language arts and/or math, schools can almost double the amount of student time in those subjects and cut teacher loads in half.

Does your district have an effective turnaround program that tailors interventions to meet individual school needs?

3. HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR TURNAROUND STRATEGY?

THE PROBLEM: Turnaround strategies are quick fixes developed outside the broader districtwide strategy for supporting and rewarding school improvement. Improvement in persistently low-performing schools rarely lasts long.

THE SOLUTION: Develop a comprehensive districtwide strategy that matches resources to each school's needs to restructure and transform the school — not to tinker around the edges.

With the information you have gathered on school and student needs, current funding levels, and school design practices, you can assess which schools are the highest priorities for turnaround and develop a districtwide strategy to support them.

An important consideration in developing your strategy is whether and how your schools might qualify for funding assistance through the U.S. Department of Education (see *There's No Better Time Than Now,* page 55 of this report). The U.S. Department of Education has worked hard to ensure that the stimulus programs share common definitions and interventions to make it easier for districts to aggregate funds and use them in support of their overall improvement plan. The persistently lowest-performing schools, defined the same way across all stimulus programs, are eligible to receive funds for the implementation of one of four models listed below.[7] These models can help districts move more quickly to focus on turning around their most needy schools.

- **Turnaround model.** Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50% of the staff; grant the new principal sufficient operational flexibility (e.g., in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- **Restart model.** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure model.** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the local education authority (LEA) that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model.** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms; (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

A school placed in turnaround within the past two years does not have to be restructured a second time if the current approach is working; these schools can use stimulus funding to more fully implement one of the models above.

Questions to Consider

❶ Do you have a systematic process to determine which federal intervention process makes sense for each turnaround school?

❷ Are you working to tell the story of why these schools need dramatic interventions to all of your key constituencies?

7 U.S. Department of Education. School Improvement Grant Web site, www.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html.

Take Action!

- **Develop a method for determining which federal intervention strategy you will implement for each turnaround school.** To be eligible for federal stimulus funding targeted at turnaround, a school must use one of the four models identified above. Although the intervention strategy you choose for each school will depend on a variety of criteria, the table below provides a starting point for matching intervention strategies to school and student needs.

IF …	CONSIDER THIS STRATEGY …
• The school has a significant number of strong teachers across subjects and specialties • The student population is similar to other schools in the district • The district has capacity to move a strong principal to the school • The school facility is in good condition and well-located relative to the student population	**Transformation model**
• The school has a core of strong teachers/teacher leaders but also has a significant number of underperforming teachers • The student population is similar to other schools in the district • The district has capacity to move a strong principal and high-quality teachers to the school • The school facility is in good condition and well-located relative to the student population	**Turnaround model**
• The school has a significant number of underperforming teachers • The district does not have capacity to move a strong principal and high-quality teachers to the school • The district wants to attract parents back into school with credible or distinctive programming • The school facility is in good condition and well-located relative to the student population	**Restart model**
• The school has a significant number of underperforming teachers • The school has a disproportionate number of students with extraordinary learning challenges relative to the district overall • There is a high percentage of students who did not actively choose to be in that school • The school has a significant number of empty seats • There are other, better options for placement for the remaining students	**School closure model**

- **Consider the pros and cons of bringing in outside organizations (e.g., charter management organizations, lead partner organizations) to run turnaround schools.** The stimulus program promotes partnerships with outside organizations. It is extremely important that your district build in certain elements as you develop working relationships with outside organizations:
  - Clearly define accountability with the outside organization, just as you do internally.
  - Work out in advance a process to ensure a smooth introduction so that students, teachers, and parents accept changes made by the outside partner. The district must hold the organization responsible for working with whichever students the district decides to assign to the school. Be aware of any students choosing to leave the school and carefully consider their placement.
  - Match funding for the outside organization with student needs. If the student population changes over time, the funding provided to the management organization may need to change accordingly.
  - Build district capacity to manage external partners. Bringing in partners without ensuring the district structures and capacity to effectively manage them will limit partners' effectiveness and the ability to transfer learning and best practices between the district and its partners.
- **Develop a plan for closing schools in extreme circumstances.** This must be a careful decision, as consequences can be serious and unexpected. In Chicago, school violence soared after school closings pushed populations from different neighborhoods into the same school. Be clear on where students from the closed school will go, work closely with community leaders throughout the decisionmaking process, and make a strong case for why the move will better serve students.
- **Consider ways to link the need to close schools because of declining enrollment (right sizing) with turnaround closure needs.** Declining enrollment and tough economic times, combined with turnaround imperatives, can be a powerful opportunity for rethinking the total number of schools and the ideal size and location for each school. A school might be combined with a higher-performing school or closed altogether, with students assigned to other underfilled schools.
- **Develop an accountability process for district and school leaders.** Your district needs to work closely with principals to set clear performance goals both for the principals and for district-level staff supporting turnaround efforts.
- **Put a communications plan in place so that key constituencies throughout the district are aware of the turnaround program and the changes it will entail.** Getting out in front of this story is always better than waiting for negative headlines. Talk openly about tough times and how they can present an opportunity for change. Explain proactively how the district plans to use stimulus money, why cuts will still be necessary, and how decisions are being made to allocate both current and new resources based on what is best for students. Be clear about how these efforts will be evaluated. This strategy is important not only for the turnaround school community but for families in other schools that may want to see the funding pie divided up equally, not equitably.

Does your district invest first in mission-critical areas?

4. WHAT ARE THE RIGHT INTERVENTIONS?

THE PROBLEM: Districts pick and choose from a menu of possible interventions, making a best guess on which silver bullet might work for all of their turnaround schools.

THE SOLUTION: Choose from a limited menu of mission-critical strategies and address the specific needs and conditions of each school.

One of the most important findings from our work in school districts is that some interventions are more powerful — and thus more important — than others. The table below lists the most common intervention strategies that districts generally consider for turnaround schools. They are divided into *mission-critical* interventions that should be first priority for school turnaround, interventions that are *important but* only effective if the mission-critical elements are in place, and interventions that admittedly are *low leverage* and should be considered with caution.

CATEGORY		INVESTMENT
Mission Critical	Strong leaders	Ensure a transformational principal and high-capacity teachers in every school. • Replace leadership if required. • Replace teachers if required. • Provide compensation and other incentives to teachers and principals. • Provide additional leadership support (e.g., assistant principal or school business manager).
	Expert teacher teams	Provide support and development for teacher teams to continuously improve instruction. • Give extra time for teacher collaboration. • Provide teacher leaders or coaches to build teacher capacity. • Report data on student performance.
	Help for at-risk students	Guarantee baseline health, social, and emotional support to students to ensure readiness for learning.
Important, But . . .	School designs driven by student needs	Provide additional time and attention to accelerate learning. • Expand instructional time. • Provide small group instruction or tutoring for struggling students that is integrated with core instruction.
	Central support	Provide additional school supervisory support and attention.
Low Leverage		• Reduce class size across the board. • Introduce standalone tutoring or other academic support programs. • Provide additional time that is not integrated with core programs (e.g., afterschool, summer).

The New York City Chancellor's School, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Strategic Staffing Schools, and the Atlanta Public Schools Project GRAD schools all are successful turnaround efforts, with each district experiencing appreciable gains in student performance over the first one to three years of the programs. The Turnaround Zone program in a fourth district was unsuccessful and abandoned. The figure on the next page arrays the interventions each district chose to invest in.

Intervention Strategies

Figure 11: Per-School Turnaround Investments by Category

INTERVENTION		NYC Chancellor's Schools	Charlotte Strategic Staffing	Atlanta Project GRAD*	District A "Turnaround Zone"
Mission Critical	Replaced principal in most or all schools	✓	✓	✓	
	Replaced underperforming teachers	✓	✓	✓	
	Compensation incentives for teachers and principals	✓	✓		
	Teacher leaders or coaches	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Support for at-risk students		✓	✓	
Important, But…	Expanded instructional time	✓			✓
	Small group instruction or tutoring that is integrated with core instruction	✓		✓	
	Additional school supervisory support and attention	✓	✓		
Low Leverage	Across-the-board class size reduction	✓			✓
	Additional time that is *not* integrated with core instruction (e.g., afterschool, summer)	✓			
Estimated Average Investment per School		$2.4MM	$160,000	$250,000	$1.2MM
Estimated Average Investment per Pupil		$3,500	$250	$630	$2,500
Results		Improvement	Improvement	Improvement	No Improvement

Percentage of 4th graders meeting reading standards increased from 98–99 to 01–02 by 17.7% in CD schools vs. 12.1% in comparable schools

Percentage of students at or above proficient increased from 08 to 09 by 6% in reading, 10% in math vs. 2–3% in both subjects districtwide

Data are limited, but in one school, 85% percent of 4th graders exceeded standard in reading, a 33% increase since the beginning of the program

No apparent improvement in student performance — program discontinued

**Atlanta replaced principals and teachers at Project Grad schools, but not as part of Project GRAD program.*

Sources:

Charlotte — ERS analysis 2008–10, Travers, J & Christainsen, B. (2010). Breaking the Cycle of Failure in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. *Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.*

Atlanta — ERS analysis 2008–10.

NYC — Phenix, D; Siegel, D.; Zaltsman, A.; and Fruchter, N. (2004). Virtual District, Real Improvement: A Retrospective Evaluation of the Chancellor's District, 1996–2003. *New York, NY: Institute for Education and Social Policy.*

District A — Published announcements by district quantify incremental investment as $1.2MM per school. ERS interviews with principals and union contract quantifies additional teacher compensation for extended time.

In all three of the successful programs, districts took specific actions to ensure that the right mix of staff talent and skills was present in each school. The New York and Charlotte programs replaced most or all of the principals in the target schools. In Atlanta, although new principals were not part of the Project GRAD effort, the district did replace principals in most of the Project GRAD schools during the measurement period as part of a separate, districtwide effort. New York and Charlotte both replaced underperforming teachers in the target schools and actively recruited high-performing teachers to replace them. These changes allowed the schools to quickly develop a culture of achievement and continuous improvement for both students and staff. In Atlanta, Project GRAD was implemented at the end of a districtwide effort to improve elementary school teacher quality. Along with providing additional teacher coaches and additional nonacademic support for at-risk students, these personnel changes represented the core of the successful programs.

All three districts were able to implement these interventions for a relatively modest investment. In Charlotte and Atlanta, this is in part because they had some teacher support infrastructure in place before the programs were introduced; in Charlotte, they counseled out the replaced teachers and principals or moved them to other schools (in contrast to New York City, where they had to be absorbed into the excess pool). In New York Ciy, even though the total per-school investment was quite high, the mission critical expense to ensure strong leaders and teachers represented only an estimated $600,000. Importantly, the cost of these interventions in all three districts was modest because the critical changes made to personnel were not expensive, they were just difficult — politically, logistically, and emotionally. District leadership recognized that such bold moves were mission critical to putting these schools on the path to success.

New York City also invested to extend learning time and to provide additional tutoring for struggling students; critically, this was done *in addition to making staffing changes.*

In contrast, District A invested $1,200,000 per school but did not replace the leadership or underperforming teachers. Over half the additional expense in the Turnaround Zone Schools was to extend the school day by a full hour. This well-intentioned investment did not pay off because the district did not first invest in the critical areas of teacher and leader capacity.

As district leaders develop intervention strategies for turnaround schools, they need to identify the district support and level of funding required to implement those strategies successfully. Any form of support to schools, whether central office supervision, professional development, or increased time for collaboration, translates to dollars. In addition to providing each school the transition resources they need now, leaders must plan ahead for ongoing funding to sustain improvement.

Over half the additional expense in the Turnaround Zone Schools was to extend the school day by a full hour. This well-intentioned investment did not pay off because the district did not first invest in the critical areas of teacher and leader capacity.

Questions to Consider

1. Does your district integrate all the interventions and programs aimed at low-performing schools?
2. Is your turnaround plan customized for each school and driven by school and student needs?
3. Are you investing first in mission critical interventions, or is your district spending valuable scarce resources in less leveraged areas?
4. Are there opportunities for you to redirect investment to mission-critical areas?

Use the worksheets on pages 80–85 to help you answer these questions.

Take Action!

MISSION-CRITICAL ACTION STEPS

- **Make sure that each turnaround school has a high-performing principal.** If the principal at a target school is new, high-performing, and has been brought in for the specific purpose of turnaround, there is no need to replace him or her. Similarly, if a high-performing principal is in place but has been stymied by uncooperative staff and the lack of flexibility to implement a turnaround program, it is possible that he or she can remain in place. This stance is allowed under ARRA if the district has placed the school in turnaround within the past two years. More often, a failing school will need a new principal with a skill set suited to rapid and effective turnaround and a new spirit of strong leadership and urgency to ignite the school's effort. Top-quality teachers will not be willing to teach in a school without a top-notch leader. Some districts find that the quickest way to get high-quality principals into turnaround schools is to take the best principals in the district and move them to the highest-needs schools. Working with outside education organizations that help recruit and train high-capacity principals is another option, but the bottom line is that turnaround is not really possible without a high-performing principal at the helm.

- **Give the principal flexibility and opportunity to bring in a team of high-performing teachers.** Turning around a school requires a core of talented and committed teachers and other staff to change the culture, attitude, and instructional practices. This core staff must be big enough to provide critical mass for the reform effort and to provide support for the principal's agenda. The principal needs to be able to create a team of people that work well together and that he or she works well with; putting together this kind of team may require changes in hiring and transfer rules. Principals need enough lead time to create a team before teachers are settled in other schools. This kind of flexibility is important even in transformation model schools where there is no federal mandate to replace staff. All teachers should have content qualifications for what they are teaching, including special education and ELL teachers; teachers who do not have content qualifications should not be teaching core academics in high-needs schools.

- **Put a process in place immediately for moving underperforming teachers out of the schools.** As principals identify and recruit high-performing teachers to their schools, they need to replace uncooperative and unsupportive teachers. The federal stimulus emphasizes the importance of using good data to identify underperforming teachers; districts can use funding to improve the evaluation of all teachers so principals can identify these underperforming teachers. In some cases, teachers moved out of turnaround schools may flourish in a different situation. Other teachers may need additional support and development to succeed at a different school. Still others may need to be counseled out of the district entirely. It is critical for your district to

develop a clear strategy for managing displaced teachers and to set aside resources to provide additional support and/or to fund a larger excess pool. A possible strategy is placing these teachers on performance plans before they are transferred and providing a coach or master teacher in their new school. Such support gives the teacher the best chance to succeed in a new environment but also provides a process to counsel the teacher out of the district if performance does not improve.

- **Provide teacher and leader incentives at turnaround schools to attract the right teachers and leaders to struggling schools.** It is critical to attract high-quality teachers and leaders to turnaround schools. Stipends or additional compensation can be one important element of the overall working environment that will motivate the best teachers and leaders to move. You should consider developing an entire incentive package for turnaround schools that includes increased compensation and more time for instruction and teacher collaboration, more flexibility around scheduling and staff assignment, and financial incentives for improved performance. However, more money alone is not enough to attract staff. You must ensure that teachers and leaders will have the support and flexibility they need to succeed, as outlined above.

- **Add leadership support for turnaround principals.** Transforming a low-performing school can be overwhelming. There is much to focus on — transforming instruction, developing staff, creating a culture of achievement, and ensuring a safe environment. In most cases, this agenda will be impossible for a single principal to achieve without help. The exact nature of the required support will depend on the skills and interests of the principal and should be structured accordingly. A passionate and outstanding instructional leader could benefit from a full-time business manager to help with day-to-day school operations; a principal with a large number of new teachers could leverage a part-time, retired principal to help with mentoring and development; or could work with a small team of proven lead teachers to provide coaching and help lead cultural change.

- **Provide best-practice, job-embedded professional development for all teachers.** You have enormous leverage in influencing how schools spend professional development time and dollars. Your district can cut back substantially on ineffective professional development by making sure that professional development is school based, job embedded, collaborative, built around student work, and focused on the needs of individual teachers throughout their careers. Strong induction and mentoring programs can help new teachers get their feet on the ground while leveraging the expertise of existing staff members. Professional learning communities built around collaborative planning allow ongoing reflection, support, and instructional growth. Professional development linked to evaluation, regular observation, and check-ins with supervisors around professional goals keeps teachers growing and assuming appropriate levels of responsibility and leadership.

- **Increase time for teachers to collaborate.** Teacher teams in turnaround schools should have significant time for collaboration and planning with expert support around student work and instructional practice. The necessary amount of *incremental* time will depend on how much teacher time existed before the school became a turnaround school. Total teacher time should include the following:

  – **Ten days before the school year starts** to review the records of incoming students and develop initial instructional approaches, receive training on assessments and available student data, build a strong team culture, and plan how to use collaborative time throughout the year

  – **Ninety or more minutes per week** with a coach or lead teacher to review formative assessment data and adjust instructional practice and student groupings and support

Teacher teams in turnaround schools should have significant time for collaboration and planning with expert support around student work and instructional practice.

  - **Half-day monthly for the entire school** to assess the effectiveness of the weekly interactions and make course corrections as required
  - **Three or more days after the school year ends** to reflect on the year; identify areas for improvement the following year; and identify additional professional development, data, and assessment needs

- **Provide expert support to guide teams in understanding student assessment data and adjusting instruction and groupings.** In many turnaround schools, full-time instructional coaches provide this support in critical subjects — most often English language arts and math.[8] An alternative approach is to designate part-time team leaders from within the existing teaching core who can provide this support as part of their roles. If qualified staff exists or can be brought to the school, the team leader approach generally is more sustainable and more cost-effective, even with an additional stipend and the additional cost of reducing the instructional load for team leaders. We recommend at least one full-time equivalent coach or team leader in English language arts and math for every 500 students in a school.

  Your district should be highly selective in identifying coaches/team leaders. Expert coaches need to have substantial content and instructional expertise and to excel at helping teachers collaborate around student work and quickly and effectively learn to adjust instruction based on what they glean from the work. Low-quality expert coaching is expensive and ineffective at improving instruction. Your district can use stimulus funds to hire and train additional coaches to bolster turnaround efforts.

- **Ensure that teachers have access to the data they need on student performance.** The federal stimulus program heavily emphasizes the use of data to inform decisions. Every state should be using these federal dollars to beef up data systems. Make sure teachers have access to effective formative assessment tools, especially in English language arts and math, and regular access to formative assessment data on their students for making sound and timely adjustments to instruction to best meet student needs.

- **Work collaboratively with teachers' unions to develop solutions to staffing and flexibility needs.** Many districts are already facing budget cuts and layoffs. Asking teachers to make additional concessions can be difficult. Federal mandates can help with this, depending on the intervention strategy chosen; but the best long-term solution is to find an approach to which both sides can agree. District leaders should work with union leadership to develop the most effective process to ensure high quality at turnaround schools. Many of the interventions recommended above — more collaborative time for teachers, expert support, better data, opportunities for lead teacher positions, compensation and other incentives — will improve working conditions for teachers. Because of the high visibility and high priority of supporting the lowest-performing schools, unions may be willing to provide more flexibility at these schools.

- **Guarantee baseline health, social, and emotional support to students to ensure readiness for learning.** Many turnaround schools have high populations of at-risk students — students who face tremendous challenges due to external factors. This includes students in extreme poverty; students in the foster care system; students in the correctional system; and high-needs students, such as special education students and ELL students. These students often struggle academically. Along with the additional learning time and individual attention outlined above, they need the appropriate social, emotional, and health support to ensure that they are ready and able to learn.

8 Bryk, A.S.; Sebring, P.B.; Allensworth, E.; Luppescu, S.; Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago.* The University of Chicago Press.

The types and levels of these services typically provided in urban schools are not enough to meet the acute needs of at-risk students. If possible, districts must systematically provide the necessary support that at-risk students need to succeed in school or formally partner with outside organizations, including city agencies, community organizations, and faith-based organizations, to meet the needs of these students and their families.

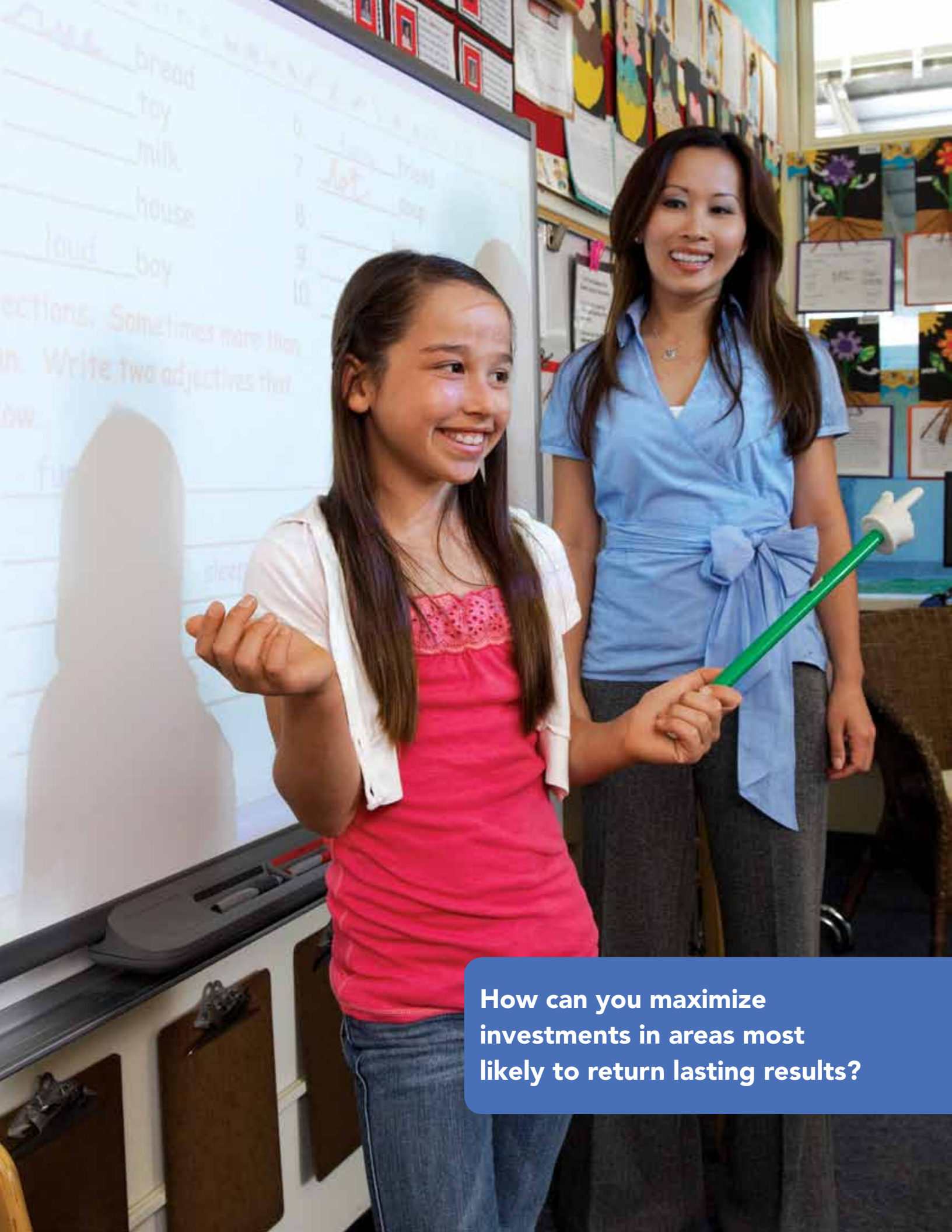
IMPORTANT, BUT . . . SECONDARY ACTION STEPS

Once you have invested in the mission-critical areas above, consider investing in the following areas to ensure that students have the time and attention they need for remediation and acceleration, and that schools have the support they need to develop and implement their instructional visions.

- **Develop school designs (e.g., schedules, staffing plans, and course offerings) that organize time and attention to meet student needs; provide individualized interventions for students to catch up.** Your district needs to help schools ensure that the students who are furthest behind get extra time focused on core academics. Most turnaround schools can and should revise school schedules to increase time in core academic areas; the students who are furthest behind will likely still need additional instructional time. Your district can provide more time and attention by extending the school day or the school year in a way that integrates additional time into the existing instructional program. This can be done by extending teacher contracts or by partnering with community providers, such as Citizen Schools. Partnerships must be carefully managed to ensure their integration with core instruction. Add-on afterschool or summer programs that are not integrated are less effective.

- **Reduce supervisory spans of control.** Consider giving district supervisors responsibility for fewer schools to allow them to truly understand the needs of each turnaround school and support school leaders by ensuring they have what they need to reach their goals.

- **Redefine central support to help schools develop and implement their turnaround vision.** District staff with responsibility for overseeing and supporting school performance and turnaround generally are tasked with compliance and do not have the capacity to provide crucial support. These district staff members often may not be aware of or trained in the elements of successful school turnaround. They are not encouraged to identify what each school needs and provide it, even when some schools will get more support than others. They do not have the data they need about student and teacher performance. They do not have the flexibility to make personnel changes, redesign schedules, and implement new instructional practices necessary to change the trajectory of performance. They are not held accountable for doing what it takes to really turn around a school. Districts should systematically and strategically provide intense support so that these staff members receive the resources, problem solving, and direction they need; districts should then hold the staff members accountable for making improvements. Along with traditional supervisory departments, the district should coordinate with other offices — human resources, special education, and budget — to make the radical changes needed in school structure, staffing, and instruction.



How can you maximize investments in areas most likely to return lasting results?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

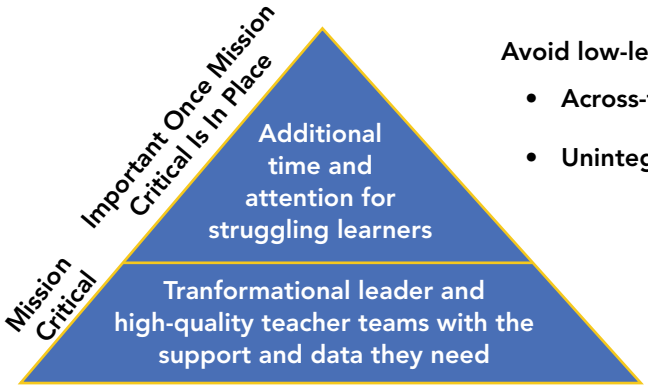
THIS IS A DIFFICULT AND POWERFUL TIME for districts that need to turn around their lowest-performing schools. Budget cuts loom for at least another couple of years. You face pressure to use stimulus funds to fill gaps and backfill longstanding programs. But the confluence of tough times and unprecedented federal support — both financial and in terms of the priority given to turnaround — also presents a major opportunity for you to transform schools and transform the district. This guide and the accompanying resource guides aim to hone in on the most pressing resource misalignments — ways in which most districts use resources that do not support their goals — to help you develop action plans to maximize the opportunity.

There's no better time than now

Right now, a confluence of factors present major opportunities for districts to take bold steps in transforming their lowest-performing schools. A federal mandate to turn around schools, unprecedented federal turnaround funding, unusual flexibility in using these funds, and difficult local budget pressures are combining to make it essential that districts focus on turnaround and find ways to make it stick. This section discusses each of these factors and the implications for district action.

Where to begin?

As you and your state begin to invest federal Race to the Top and School Improvement funds to turn around your lowest-performing schools, how can you maximize your investments in areas most likely to return lasting, scalable results?



Avoid low-leverage areas:

- **Across-the-board class size reduction**
- **Unintegrated add-on programs**

FIRST, match incremental turnaround funding and support to each school's need, taking into account current funding levels and school practices.

SECOND, focus investment first in mission-critical areas to ensure a transformational leader and high-quality teams of teachers that can create a culture of achievement. Next, use incremental funding to increase student time in key academic areas and provide struggling learners with the instructional support they need. Avoid investing in less leveraged areas like across-the-board class size reduction and add-on programs that are not integrated with the core instructional programs.

THIRD, build a foundation for long-term success:

- Evaluate your district's funding system and consider changing how schools are funded to ensure that the highest-needs students, including struggling learners who are not in special education, receive the resources they deserve at all schools, not just turnaround schools.
- Look at the schools in your district that do not qualify as turnaround schools but are still struggling. Consider whether any of the interventions here might be appropriate for those schools and develop a long-term strategy for ensuring that they receive the support they need.

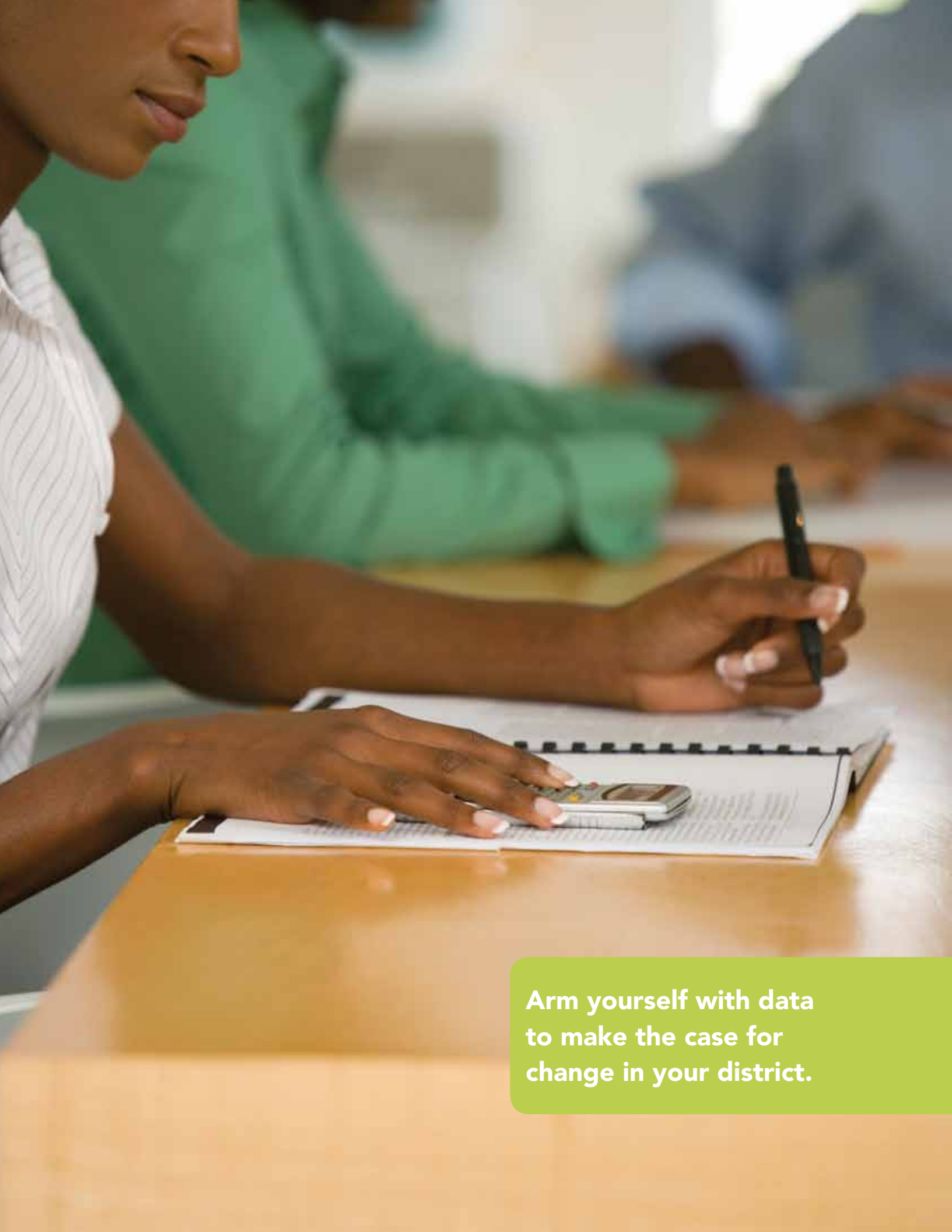
Budget implications

Your district may be faced with several pressing budget challenges. You have to cut budgets, integrate and report on the use of stimulus funds, and figure out how to shift resources to successfully turn around schools. The action items in this guide are designed to help with all of these.

Even with the influx of federal stimulus funding, districts are struggling to make cuts in a way that will have the least negative effect on students. You can choose to do less with less by cutting across the board, or you can protect funding for the schools and students who need it most by being strategic with budget reductions. The table below summarizes the budget implications of the actions described in this guide and suggest how districts can leverage federal funding to reverse misalignments and build a foundation for the future.

TO REVERSE MISALIGNMENTS		
Reduce spending by …	**Shift resources …**	**Increase spending to …**
• Managing out low-performing staff • Discontinuing fragmented and add-on programs that are not integrated with the overall school vision and strategy • Eliminating class size reduction initiatives except in targeted high-needs grades and courses	• From high-performing to low-performing schools by moving high-performing principals and teachers • From high-performing to low-performing schools by matching funding levels to student needs *Within schools:* • From noncore to core instruction by adjusting bell and course schedules to reduce teacher load and increase time in core subjects • From specialist to generalist instruction by introducing push strategies for supporting special populations, giving special populations better access to core instruction, and leveraging specialist resources across more students • From remediation/special education to early intervention by introducing early intervention programs such as response to intervention (RTI) to reduce diagnosis into special education	• Create at least 90 minutes of collaborative planning time per week for all teachers • Staff full-time literacy and/or math coaches at each school • Provide financial incentives to get the right staff into turnaround schools • Extend time and/or add after-school support for acceleration

TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION	
Invest transition resources to … • Develop a districtwide school performance measurement system and process • Develop a districtwide teacher effectiveness measurement system • Develop districtwide formative assessments and a student data system • Train principals in strategic school design • Train teachers in the use of formative assessments • Accelerate learning for students already in the building who are furthest behind grade level • Move underperforming teachers out of the system	**Lay groundwork for long-term change by …** • Making the case for moving high-capacity resources to low-performing schools • Developing a funding system in which resources are linked to student needs



Arm yourself with data to make the case for change in your district.

DO-IT-YOURSELF WORKSHEETS

THIS SECTION INCLUDES worksheets with step-by-step instructions to help you calculate and measure the distinct characteristics of your turnaround schools or help you identify schools in your district with greater needs. Armed with this knowledge, you will be able to quantify transformational opportunities for your district.

Analyses for Turnaround Schools

	ANALYSIS	WORKSHEET
WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL NEED?	Student needs	1. Student needs in turnaround versus non-turnaround schools
	School leader and teacher capacity	2. Incidence of new teachers in turnaround and non-turnaround schools 3. Distribution of high-performing teachers by school performance
	School practices	4. Essential school practices in turnaround schools
WHAT DOES EACH SCHOOL GET?	Funding levels	5. General education spending per pupil by school
	Use of resources — class size	6. Elementary school class size in turnaround versus non-turnaround schools 7. Secondary school class size in core and noncore subjects 8. General education class size relative to student-teacher ratios
	Use of resources — instructional time	9. Total instructional time 10. Instructional time in core subjects
HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR TURNAROUND STRATEGY?	Self-assessment	
WHAT ARE THE RIGHT INTERVENTIONS?	Investment by category	11. Per-school turnaround investments by category

PREREQUISITE STEP: IDENTIFY TURNAROUND SCHOOLS.

Before digging into the analyses for your turnaround schools, make sure you have identified your district's turnaround schools, or schools that you are considering for turnaround.

Data checklist

Use this list to gather the data and files that you will need to complete the worksheets that follow. Once you have the data you need and know which questions you want to answer, follow the steps identified below for the appropriate analyses.

☐ **District budget file at the lowest level of detail available. This file will allow you to:**

a. Exclude all nonoperating budget line items.

b. Exclude any nondistrict-K–12 budget line items.

c. Provide position-level detail to identify FTEs and position titles by department/location (i.e., you can identify the number of classroom teachers at each school in the district).

d. Provide funding-source information to allow you to identify spending on special populations (specifically special education, ELL, and students in poverty)

e. Provides actual salary, not average salary, for positions.

☐ **District K–12 enrollment file by grade and by school. This file will allow you to:**

a. Identify total student enrollment by student type:

i. Identify total general education enrollment.

ii. Identify total ELL enrollment, broken out by program so you know which students are self-contained/substantially separate and which students are integrated/mainstreamed.

iii. Identify total special education enrollment, broken out by program so you know which students are self-contained/substantially separate and which students are integrated/mainstreamed.

b. Identify total student enrollment by student demographic (e.g., poverty).

☐ **District K–12 student performance file. This file will allow you to:**

a. Track student performance metrics for various testing instruments in district (e.g., statewide standardized exams).

☐ **District K–12 course file by student, by grade, by school. This file will allow you to:**

a. Measure instructional time by subject for each student:

i. Determine core versus noncore classification of each course.

ii. Determine start and end time for each period.

b. Determine average class sizes.

☐ **District current year human resources file. This file will allow you to:**

a. Determine total years of experience in teaching, in district and in school.

b. Characterize teachers by district's measure of effectiveness.

Note: Districts will differ by how they capture an effectiveness measure for each teacher. If this is not tracked through the overall HR file, each principal at each school may aggregate this information separately.

WORKSHEET 1 Student needs in turnaround versus non-turnaround schools

OBJECTIVE: Determine the level of student needs at your lower-performing schools versus the rest of the district

SUMMARY OF METRICS

PART 1

STEP 1: Calculate total student enrollment and enrollment by student type for each school.

STEP 2: Calculate percentage of student population by student type at each school.

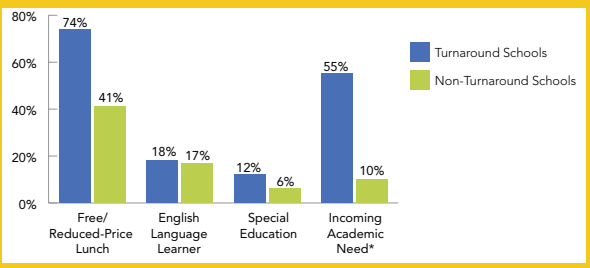
STEP 3: Identify students with academic need based on percent of students at/above proficient or below proficient.

STEP 4: Calculate average rates of student needs in turnaround versus non-turnaround schools.

STEP 5: Graph comparison metrics to illustrate student need disparities.

REMINDER

Figure 1: Students Needs in Turnaround versus Non-Turnaround Schools



STEP 1: Calculate total student enrollment and enrollment by student type for each school.

1. Using your district enrollment file:
   a. Determine the total student enrollment for each school.
      i. *Ensure you look at students enrolled after a district-specified entry date to make a consistent comparison across student populations (e.g., 40 days after the first day of school).*
      ii. *Identify the number of unique student IDs for each school that are enrolled at this specific cut-off date.*
   b. Determine the total student enrollment by student type.
      i. *Ensure you look at students enrolled after a district-specified entry date to make a consistent comparison across student populations (e.g., 40 days after the first day of school).*
      ii. *Identify student need categories in your student database: free/reduced-price lunch, special education students, and ELL. Students who are off track or struggling academically are addressed in Step 3.*

      Note: For this analysis we used the relatively broad categories listed here. For a more complete understanding of student needs by school you may want to drill down further (e.g., self-contained special education students, ELL students by language, or struggling students based on several academic measures).
      iii. *Identify the number of unique student IDs for each school in each category.*

STEP 2: Calculate percentage of student population for each student type at each school.

1. Using the figures you calculated for each school above, perform the following calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Number of unique student IDs for each student type at each school}}{\text{Total student enrollment at each school}} = \textbf{Percentage of student population by student type}$$

STEP 3: Identify students with academic need based on percent of students at/above proficient or below proficient.

1. Identify the test instrument to measure student performance (e.g., state standardized exams, formative assessments).
2. Determine cut-off points for at/above proficient and below proficient.
3. Using your district student performance file:
   a. Identify the number of unique student IDs for each school that are at/above and below proficient.
   b. Calculate percentage of student population by academic performance (reference formula above). For purposes of comparison, we have defined students scoring below proficient as students with academic need.

STEP 4: Calculate average rates of student needs in turnaround versus non-turnaround schools.

1. You now have a full set of student need metrics for each school:
   a. Percentage of free/reduced-price lunch, students with disabilities, and ELL.
   b. Percentage of students at/above and below proficient.
2. Identify your turnaround (or potential turnaround) school group, either in aggregate or by school type (e.g., elementary versus middle school).
3. To take it a step further, compare individuals schools against each other.

STEP 5: Graph comparison metrics to illustrate student need disparities.

1. Construct a bar graph with:
   a. Y-axis: Percentage of students.
   b. X-axis: Student need comparison bucket (e.g., ELL, academic need).
   c. Each bar can represent a comparison group, e.g.,
      i. *Turnaround school versus non-turnaround schools.*
      ii. *Turnaround elementary schools versus non-turnaround elementary schools.*
      iii. *Etc.*

WORKSHEET ❷ Incidence of new teachers in turnaround and non-turnaround schools

OBJECTIVE: Determine the incidence of "new to school" and "new to teaching" teachers at your lowest-performing schools to assess whether there is a need to stabilize the workforce or provide additional support

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Based on HR data file, identify "new to school" and "new to teaching" teachers by school.

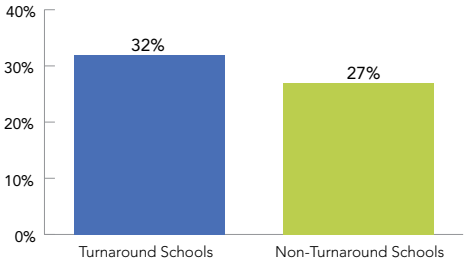
STEP 2: Calculate percentage of "new to teaching" and "new to school" teachers by school.

STEP 3: Calculate average percentage of "new to teaching" and "new to school" teachers for turnaround (or potential turnaround) and non-turnaround schools.

STEP 4: Graph comparison metrics to illustrate disparities in teacher experience and stability.

REMINDER

Figure 2: Incidence of New Teachers in Turnaround and Non-Turnaround Schools



STEP 1: Based on HR data file, identify "new to school" and "new to teaching" teachers by school.

1. Using your district HR file:
   a. Identify metrics used to define years of teaching experience. These are often listed as years of experience in district, years of experience in school, years of experience in teaching, or the salary step.
   b. Identify which measures denote total years of experience in teaching and years of experience in school.
   c. The analysis in this guide defines "new to teaching" as three years of total teaching experience or fewer. We also encourage you to calculate "new to school" as teachers who have been at their current school for three years or fewer.
      i. For total teacher population, identify the number of unique teacher IDs for each school.
      ii. For each school, identify how many of those teachers are "new to teaching" and "new to school."

STEP 2: Calculate percentage of "new to teaching" and "new to school" teachers by school.

1. Using the figures you calculated for each school above, perform the following calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Number of teacher IDs with 3 years or fewer teaching experience}}{\text{Total teacher IDs for school}} = \textbf{Percentage of teachers new to teaching, by school}$$

$$\frac{\text{Number of teacher IDs with 3 years or fewer experience at the specific school}}{\text{Total teacher IDs for school}} = \textbf{Percentage of teachers new to school, by school}$$

STEP 3: Calculate average percentage of "new to teaching" and "new to school" teachers for turnaround (or potential turnaround) and non-turnaround schools.

1. Identify your turnaround (or potential turnaround) school group, either in aggregate or by school type (e.g., elementary versus middle school).
2. Calculate the weighted average percentage of "new to teaching" and "new to school" teachers for turnaround (or potential turnaround) and non-turnaround schools.
3. To take it a step further, compare individuals schools against each other.

STEP 4: Graph comparison metrics to illustrate disparities in teacher experience and stability.

1. Construct a bar graph with:
   a. Y-axis: Percentage of teachers.
   b. X-axis: Comparison group (e.g., turnaround versus non-turnaround schools).
   c. Graph the level of "new to teaching" and "new to school" for each comparison group.

WORKSHEET 3 Distribution of high-performing teachers by school performance

OBJECTIVE: Understand distribution of teachers across schools based on a district definition of effectiveness

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Define category/definition of teacher effectiveness based on HR file.

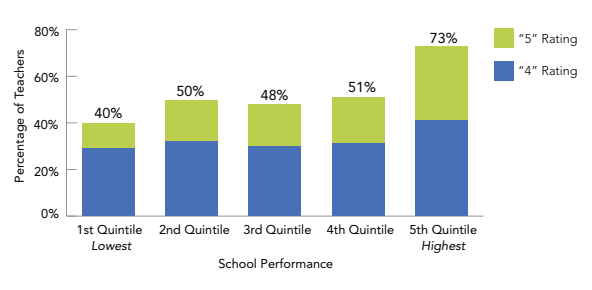
STEP 2: Calculate the number and percentage of teachers in each effectiveness category by school.

STEP 3: Calculate performance quintiles for district.

STEP 4: Graph comparison metrics to understand distribution of teacher effectiveness by school performance.

REMINDER

Figure 3: Distribution of High-Performing Teachers by School Performance



Note: The district definition of effectiveness is based on how your district determines an overall rating for each teacher in a school year.

STEP 1: Define category/definition of teacher effectiveness based on HR file.

1. **Using your district HR file:**
   a. Identify column used to define the teacher effectiveness category.
   b. Ensure there is a consistent effectiveness definition for all teachers (i.e., the HR file properly characterizes all teachers in a set rubric system (e.g., rating 1–5) to develop a comparable HR set).

STEP 2: Calculate the number and percentage of teachers in each effectiveness category by school.

1. **For each school, determine the number of unique teacher IDs for each effectiveness category defined in your district.**
   a. For example, if your district's effectiveness rating system is on a 1–5 scale, identify the number of teachers who have a 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 rating.

2. **For each effectiveness category, calculate the percentage of teachers.**
   a. For example, if your district's effectiveness rating system is on a 1–5 scale, calculate the percentage of total teachers with ratings of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

STEP 3: Calculate performance quintiles for district.

1. Based on the student performance categorizations done in Worksheet 1, Step 4, you now know the distribution of proficiency level for each student in each school.
2. To determine student performance quintile for each school, find the average performance percentile for each school in your district.
3. With this, you can develop student performance quartile/quintile for each school.
4. For each student performance quartile/quintile, calculate the average percentage of teachers in each effectiveness category using the information you calculated in Step 2.

STEP 4: Graph comparison metrics to understand distribution of teacher effectiveness by school performance.

1. Construct a bar graph with:
   a. Y-axis: Percentage of teachers in each effectiveness category.
   b. X-axis: Performance quartile/quintile (e.g., 25th percentile, 50th percentile).
   c. Use color differentiation of your bars to define the effectiveness category (e.g., Category 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5).
   d. Graph the percentage of teachers in each effectiveness category.

WORKSHEET 4 Essential school practices in turnaround schools

OBJECTIVE: Assess current practices in the school to help determine what is working, what is not, and what supports are needed at the school

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Identify dimensions for evaluation.

STEP 2: Develop evaluation rubric.

STEP 3: Define evaluation process.

REMINDER

Figure 4: Essential School Practices in Turnaround Schools

Turnaround School	Accountability	Culture, Teamwork, Vision	Strong School Leaders	Strong Teachers	Focus on Instruction	Social and Emotional Support for Students	Family Engagement
School 1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 5	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 6	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●
School 7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 8	●	●	●	●	●	●	N/A
School 9	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
School 12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● High Need ● Mid Need ● Low Need

The illustration below (also on page 30) depicts a potential evaluation mechanism one district has considered to determine areas of need and improvement.

If your district has developed a set of essential school practices and has a process for evaluating how well each school is implementing those practices, you should use that information for this analysis. If your district does not have these, the steps below outline a high-level process for developing them. While this process can provide valuable information for implementing a turnaround strategy in the short term, we recommend that districts invest the time and resources in developing a district-specific set of essential school practices and a comprehensive evaluation process for all schools.

STEP 1: Identify dimensions for evaluation.

1. You will first need to identify which school practices you want to assess. The list in the chart on page 30 is one example. Other examples are available on our Web site: www.ERStrategies.org. Search on "School Essentials."

STEP 2: Develop evaluation rubric.

1. A detailed rubric outlining how to evaluate each school's performance is important to ensure consistency in evaluation. You can find several examples of effective rubrics on our Web site: www.ERStrategies.org. Search on "School Essentials."

STEP 3: Define evaluation process.

1. **Define who will conduct the evaluation.** While it may be easiest for the principal and staff at a school to assess their own practices, this may not allow for consistent comparison across the district. Critically consider who will provide a thorough evaluation of not only a single school but a meaningful set of assessments for comparison across the district. This may require a collaborative evaluation process that includes both the principal and staff at the school as well as district personnel.

2. **Conduct the evaluation.** For purposes of informing your turnaround strategy, the evaluation may need to be done relatively quickly. Consider any results from such a process to be preliminary only.

3. **Compile the results.** Develop a table that lists each school's rating on each dimension.

WORKSHEET 5 General education spending per pupil by school

OBJECTIVE: Determine the level of general education spending per pupil for each school and the impact of actual or potential incremental turnaround funding

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Calculate general education per-pupil instructional cost.

STEP 2: Calculate per-pupil noninstructional fixed cost.

STEP 3: Calculate general education per-pupil spend, school reported.

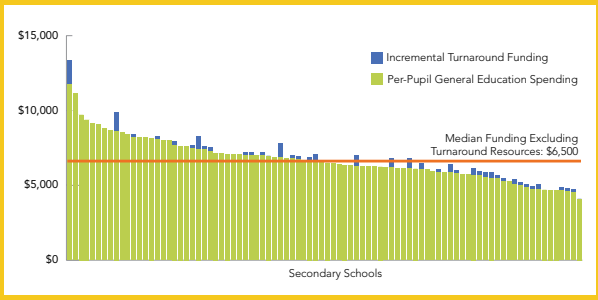
STEP 4: Determine the incremental turnaround funding per pupil.

STEP 5: Calculate the median of general education per-pupil spend, school reported excluding this turnaround funding.

STEP 6: Graph general education per-pupil spend, school reported, highlighting turnaround funding.

REMINDER

Figure 5: General Education Spending Per Pupil by School



Note: If you have read Funding Systems: Equity, Transparency, Flexibility, *you will recognize this analysis from Worksheet 1: "General education spending per pupil by school and school level."*

General education per-pupil spend, school reported is the most complicated measure to calculate. It is also the most critical, because it offers a true "apples-to-apples" comparison of general education spending across schools. This metric not only helps you to identify and manage inequity, but can also be used to counter questions and objections from others who may be using less accurate spending measures.

We define it as:

General education per-pupil instructional cost (Step 1)
+ Per-pupil noninstructional fixed cost (Step 2)

General education per-pupil spend, school reported (Step 3)

STEP 1: Calculate general education per-pupil instructional cost.

1. **Using your district budget file:**
   a. Determine the total K–12 operating budget for each school.
      i. *Exclude nonoperating budget line items that are budgeted at schools (e.g., debt service, property rental/lease, capital expenses).*
      ii. *Exclude non-K–12 budget line items that may be budgeted at schools (adult education, preK, etc.).*
   b. Determine the total spending on general education instructional staff (teachers and aides) for each school.
      i. *Identify total spending on teachers' and aides' compensation for each school.*
      ii. *Exclude any teachers and aides that do not work in a general education classroom (e.g., ELL teachers, special education teachers).*
2. **Using your district K–12 enrollment file:**
   a. Identify the total number of K–12 students for each school
   b. Identify the total number of K–12 students in general education classrooms for each school.
      i. *This includes general education students and all special needs students that may be mainstreamed and sit in a general education classroom (i.e., most often all special needs students EXCEPT special education self-contained students).*

ii. *Specifically:*

K–12 total enrollment
– K–12 special education self-contained enrollment

K–12 students in general education classrooms

3. Calculate general education per-pupil instructional cost.

Total spend on general education instructional staff / Total number of K–12 students in general education classrooms = **General education per-pupil instructional cost**

STEP 2: Calculate per-pupil noninstructional fixed cost.

1. Using your district budget file:
   a. Determine the total K–12 operating budget for each school.
      i. *Exclude nonoperating budget line items that are budgeted at schools (e.g., debt service, property rental/lease, capital expenses).*
      ii. *Exclude non-K–12 budget line items that may be budgeted at schools (adult education, preK, etc.).*
   b. Determine the total unspecified spending at each school (i.e., exclude positions and resources used for ELL, special education, and free/reduced-price lunch).
2. Identify total number of K–12 students for each school (from Step 1).
3. Calculate:

Total unspecified spending
– Total spend on general education instructional staff

Total noninstructional schoolwide fixed costs

4. Calculate per-pupil noninstructional fixed cost:

Noninstructional schoolwide fixed costs / Total K–12 students (includes special education and ELL) = **Per-pupil noninstructional fixed cost**

STEP 3: Calculate general education per-pupil spend, school reported.

General education per-pupil instructional cost (Step 1)
+ Per-pupil noninstructional fixed cost (Step 2)

General education per-pupil spend, school reported

STEP 4: Determine the incremental turnaround funding per pupil.

Using your district budget file:

1. Determine the line items/columns that capture the turnaround funding each school in your district receives (funding is often included under the turnaround initiative header).
    i. *Exclude any expenses that are targeted specifically at students other than general education students (e.g., incremental special education teachers or aides). Expenses targeted at all students in the school should be included.*
2. Based on the K–12 enrollment numbers for each school, calculate the turnaround funding allocated per pupil by:

$$\frac{\text{School turnaround funding for that school}}{\text{Total school K–12 students (includes special education and ELL)}} = \textbf{Per-pupil turnaround funding}$$

STEP 5: Calculate the median of the general education per-pupil spend, school reported, excluding this turnaround funding.

STEP 6: Graph general education per-pupil spend, school reported, highlighting turnaround funding.

1. Construct a bar graph with:
    a. Y-axis: Dollars (in 000s).
    b. X-axis: Each bar represents a different school (you can choose to graph only the turnaround schools or all schools in the district).
    c. Use color differentiation of your bars to show the incremental per-pupil turnaround funding you calculated in Step 4.
    d. Graph the per-pupil expense for each school.

NOTE: LIMITATIONS TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION PER-PUPIL EXPENSE CALCULATION

This metric reflects only school-reported expense: only what the district budgets at the school-level. This may differ by district. For example, in one district, custodians may be a line item on every school budget and would be included in this school-reported number, while in another district, they may be budgeted centrally within the department of custodial services and thus would not be in this number. School-reported numbers may not provide an accurate picture of equity. For instance, if a district allocates custodians inequitably to schools, that inequity does not appear in the school-reported number, because the custodians are budgeted centrally and are not on school budgets. Generally, the less of your district's budget that is school reported, the less accurately this comparison measures equity.

This metric looks only at the spending on general education students. It excludes the additional funding going to ELL and special education students. General education will not reflect inequity in the distribution of special education and ELL funds across schools.

WORKSHEET 6 Elementary school class size in turnaround versus non-turnaround schools

OBJECTIVE: To understand whether turnaround schools have invested resources to reduce class size that might be more effectively used to improve teaching effectiveness

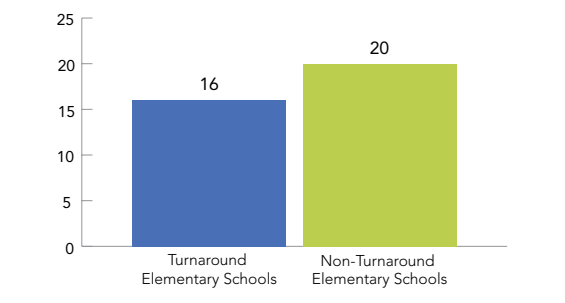
SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Identify the average general education homeroom class size at each elementary school.

STEP 2: Calculate the average general education homeroom class size at turnaround elementary schools versus non-turnaround elementary schools.

REMINDER

Figure 6: Elementary School Class Size in Turnaround versus Non-Turnaround Schools



STEP 1: Identify the average general education homeroom class size at each elementary school.

1. Use your district's homeroom or course file:
   a. Identify all the general education homeroom classes at each elementary school.
      i. *Exclude any self-contained homeroom classes that consist primarily (>60%) of special education or ELL students.*
   b. For each general education homeroom class, calculate the class size by counting the number of students assigned to the class.
   c. For each elementary school, calculate the average general education homeroom class size at the school.

STEP 2: Calculate the average general education homeroom class size at turnaround elementary schools versus non-turnaround elementary schools.

1. Categorize all your elementary schools into turnaround (or potential turnaround) versus non-turnaround schools.
2. Calculate the average general education homeroom class size for turnaround schools.
3. Calculate the average general education homeroom class size for non-turnaround schools.
4. Graph the results to compare the difference across school categories.
5. To take it a step further, compare individual turnaround (or potential turnaround) schools against each other.

WORKSHEET 7 Secondary school class size in core and noncore subjects

OBJECTIVE: To understand how secondary school class size varies by grade and subject

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

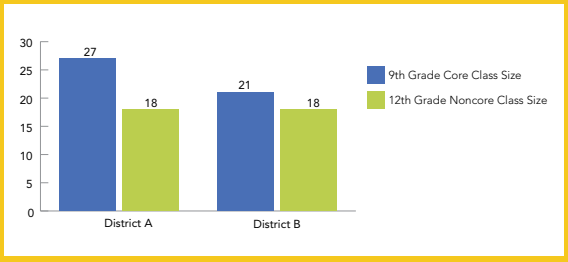
STEP 2: Categorize all the classes at each school by subject and grade.

STEP 3: Calculate the average class size by subject and grade.

STEP 4: Graph the average class size by subject and grade within and across schools.

REMINDER

Figure 7: Secondary School Class Size in Core and Noncore Subjects



Note: This guide illustrates this analysis at the district level and shows the comparison between 9th grade core class sizes and 12th grade noncore class sizes. For your analysis, it is most useful to do this comparison for each turnaround school or potential turnaround school to understand the school-level resource use. You can also do a more in-depth analysis by comparing class sizes across specific grades and subjects. While this analysis is most relevant for high schools, it can also be useful at the middle school level.

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

1. Identify the schools you wish to analyze. This should include all turnaround secondary schools and/or secondary schools you are considering for turnaround. You may also wish to include a few high-performing secondary schools for comparison.

STEP 2: Categorize all the classes at each school by subject and grade.

1. Use your district's course file to identify all the classes offered at each school.

2. For each school, assign a grade, subject, and category to each class.

   a. **Grade:** The grade level of a class can be determined either by the course name (i.e., Algebra 1 is considered a 9th grade class) or by the student composition (i.e., math classes that have 50% or more 9th graders are considered to be 9th grade math classes) — use whichever method is more appropriate for your district.

   b. **Subject:** The subject of a class can usually be determined by the course name. Subjects to be identified include: English language arts, math, science, social studies, foreign language, art, music, health, computer literacy, vocational/career, and internship.

   c. **Category:** Core classes include the following subjects: English language arts, math, science, social studies, and foreign language. Noncore subjects include art, music, health, computer literacy, vocational/career, and internship. Note that physical education is excluded from this noncore definition for the purposes of this analysis because PE class sizes are generally quite large and can skew the average noncore class size.

STEP 3: Calculate the average class size by subject and grade.

1. Calculate the class size for each class by counting the number of students assigned to it.
2. Calculate the average class size for all possible subject and grade combinations (i.e., 12th grade English, 11th grade math, etc.).

STEP 4: Graph the average class size by subject and grade within and across schools.

1. The chart in this guide graphs the average class sizes for 9th grade core classes versus 12th grade noncore classes in turnaround schools versus non-turnaround schools.
2. You will get the most value out of this analysis by comparing differences in classes across subjects and grades. For example:
   a. Class sizes often decrease in higher grades across secondary schools, generally because more students have dropped out, and more are taking electives. A better strategy may be to target the smallest classes in transition years (6th and 9th grade). Do you see this trend at any of your schools?
   b. We often see that class sizes in core classes are significantly higher than class sizes in noncore classes. Do you see this at any of your schools?
   c. Be sure to look at differences both within and across schools. We find that turnaround schools often have significantly more school-level resource use misalignments compared to non-turnaround schools.

WORKSHEET 8 General education class size relative to student-teacher ratios

OBJECTIVE: To understand how much teaching resource is tied up in specialty and nonclassroom positions and assignments at turnaround (or potential turnaround) schools

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

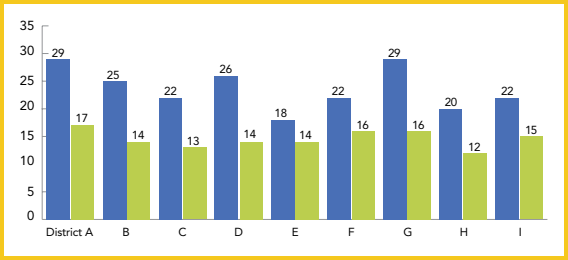
STEP 2: Calculate the total student-teacher ratio for each school.

STEP 3: Calculate the average general education class size at each school.

STEP 4: Graph the difference between total student-teacher ratio and the average general education class size at each school and across schools.

REMINDER

Figure 8: General Education Class Size Relative to Student-Teacher Ratios



Note: This guide illustrates this analysis at the district level. For your analysis, it is most useful to do this comparison for each turnaround school or potential turnaround school to understand how much of a school's teaching resources are tied up in self-contained, specialty, and nonclassroom positions and assignments.

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

1. Identify the schools you wish to analyze. This should include all turnaround schools and/or potential turnaround schools. You may also wish to include a few high-performing schools for comparison.

STEP 2: Calculate the total student-teacher ratio for each school.

1. Using your district budget or HR file:
   a. Identify the total number of K–12 teachers at each school.
      i. *Please count only K–12 teachers for the grades each school serves (exclude pre-K, adult education., etc.).*
      ii. *Please include all categories of K–12 teachers (general education, ELL, special education, etc.).*
2. Using your district's enrollment file:
   a. Identify the total K–12 enrollment at each school.
3. Calculate the total student-teacher ratio at each school.

$$\frac{\text{Total K–12 enrollment}}{\text{Total K–12 teachers}} = \textbf{Total student-teacher ratio}$$

STEP 3: Calculate the average general education class size at each school.

1. For elementary schools, use your district's homeroom file to:
   a. Identify all the general education homeroom classes at each school.
      i. Exclude any self-contained homeroom classes that consist primarily (>60%) of special education or ELL students.
   b. For each general education homeroom class, calculate the class size by counting the number of students assigned to the class.
   c. For each elementary school, calculate the average general education homeroom class size at the school.
2. For secondary schools, use your district's course file to:
   a. Identify all the general education core classes at each school.
      i. We use general education core classes only in this calculation because they provide the most accurate representation of teaching staff used for core academic instruction. Noncore class sizes may be very high (e.g., physical education) or very low (e.g., electives) and may therefore under- or over-state the resources devoted to specialist instruction. Core subjects include English language arts, math, science, social studies, and foreign language.
      ii. Exclude any self-contained core classes that consist primarily (>60%) of special education or ELL students.
   b. For each general education core class, calculate the class size by counting the number of students assigned to the class.
   c. For each secondary school, calculate the average general education core class size at the school.

STEP 4: Graph the difference between total student-teacher ratio and the average general education class size at each school and across schools.

1. The chart in this guide graphs the differences at the district level, but you should graph ratios for each school for which you performed the analysis.
2. For your district, graph the total student-teacher ratio and the average general education class size for each turnaround (or potential turnaround) school and any high-performing schools that you have included for comparison.

WORKSHEET 9 Total instructional time

OBJECTIVE: To understand how much time turnaround (or potential turnaround) schools are investing in instruction

SUMMARY OF METRICS

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

STEP 2: Identify the length of the school day for each school and the district average length of school day.

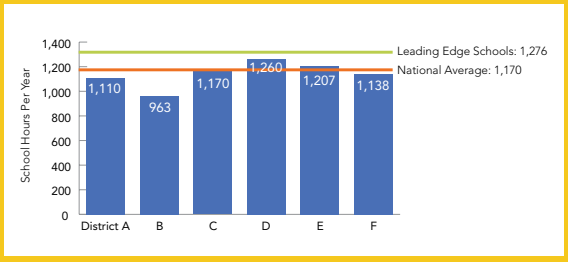
STEP 3: Identify the length of the school year for each school and the district average length of school year.

STEP 4: Calculate the school hours per year for each school and the district average school hours per year.

STEP 5: Graph differences in the school hours per year across schools.

REMINDER

Figure 9: Total Instructional Time



Note: This guide illustrates this analysis at the district level. For your analysis, it is most useful to do this comparison for each turnaround school or potential turnaround school relative to the overall district average to understand differences in the length of the school day/year.

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

1. Identify the schools you wish to analyze. This should include all turnaround schools and/or potential turnaround schools. You may also wish to include a few high-performing secondary schools for comparison.

STEP 2: Identify the length of the school day for each school and the district average length of school day.

1. Identify the start and end times for every school in the district using the district's course schedule database or master schedule records.
2. Calculate the length of school day in hours for each school in the district.
3. Take the average across schools to get the district's average length of school day (in hours).

STEP 3: Identify the length of the school year for each school and the district average length of school year.

1. If the length of the school year is dictated by collective bargaining agreements/state law/etc. and is the same across all schools, please use that as the length of the school year.
2. Otherwise, identify the start and end date for every school in the district using the district's course schedule database or master schedule records and calculate the length of school year (in days) for each school.
3. Take the average across schools to get the district's average length of school year (in days).

STEP 4: Calculate the school hours per year for each school and the district average school hours per year.

1. **For each school:**

   Length of the school day (in hours)
   x Length of the school year (in days)

   School's hours per year

2. **Calculate the district's average school hours per year:**

   District's average length of school day (in hours)
   x District's average length of school year (in days)

   District's average school hours per year

STEP 5: Graph differences in the school hours per year across schools.

1. The chart in this guide graphs the district's average school hours per year against the national average and other districts.

2. For your district, graph your district's average school hours per year and the school hours per year for each turnaround (or potential turnaround) school. You may also want to compare your district's school hours per year to the other district's presented in the chart on page 39.

WORKSHEET ⑩ Instructional time in core subjects

OBJECTIVE: To understand whether turnaround (or potential turnaround) schools are investing additional time in core academic subjects

SUMMARY OF METRICS

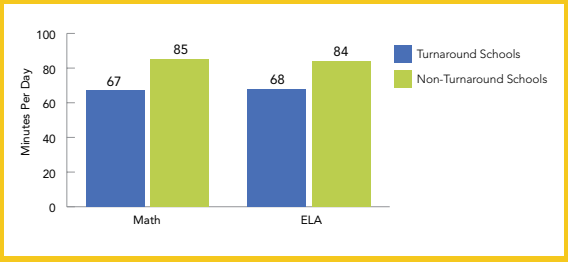
STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

STEP 2: Calculate average daily instruction minutes by core subject by school.

STEP 3: Graph comparison metrics to illustrate instructional time differences for turnaround versus non-turnaround schools.

REMINDER

Figure 10: Instructional Time in Core Subjects



Note: This guide illustrates this analysis at the district level by aggregating all schools. It may time-consuming to calculate this metric for all schools in your district. Therefore, you may choose to understand this metric at each turnaround school or potential turnaround school, and then choose a subset of representative other schools to use for comparison purposes.

STEP 1: Identify the schools for which you will perform this analysis.

1. **Identify the schools you wish to analyze. This should include all turnaround secondary schools and/or secondary potential turnaround schools. You will also want to identify a group of representative non-turnaround secondary schools to use as a comparison.**

STEP 2: Calculate average daily instruction minutes by core subject by school.

1. **Using your district course file:**
   a. Identify the unique course ID or course name that is assigned to each course a student takes (e.g., Math/5 may be the way a unique student ID is assigned to Math/5).
   b. For each course ID/course name, identify columns that indicate how long this class is in a day. Based on the way your systems aggregate data, this could have a few representations.
      i. *Course start time/course end time: Calculate the difference in minutes in these two columns to get total minutes.*
      ii. *Course duration: This will provide the actual length of the course.*
      iii. *Course units where a course unit equals the number of minutes.*
   c. Once you have course duration, calculate the total number of minutes a student spends in core subjects by adding all minutes for each subject.
   d. Calculate the average number of minutes in each core subject.

STEP 3: Graph comparison metrics to illustrate instructional time differences for turnaround versus non-turnaround schools.

1. Construct a bar graph with:
   a. Y-axis: Number of minutes.
   b. X-axis: Core subject (e.g., Math, ELA). Although the analysis in the guide reflects Math and ELA, this analysis is relevant for all core subjects.
   c. Graph the number of minutes by subject for each of your turnaround (or potential turnaround) secondary schools and for your representative non-turnaround schools. You may want to look at turnaround and non-turnaround schools in aggregate, and then look further at each school in each sample.

WORKSHEET 11 Per-school turnaround investments by category

OBJECTIVE: Quantify the incremental investment for turnaround interventions for a single school

Note: The figure on page 48 details the average annual per-school intervention cost of four turnaround programs. Your program may have some elements that are common across all turnaround schools, and others that are unique to individual schools based on their needs. As you develop your district's program, we encourage you to estimate the expected annual investment for each school. Below, we have provided the methodology to estimate the cost of the interventions included in the four programs we describe. You will need to develop quantifications for other interventions not listed here.

INTERVENTION TYPE	STEP	CALCULATE THE COST OF…
MISSION CRITICAL	Step 1	Replacing the principal.
	Step 2	Replacing underperforming teachers.
	Step 3	Providing incentives to teachers and leaders.
	Step 4	Adding teacher leaders and/or coaches.
	Step 5	Providing support for at-risk students.
IMPORTANT, BUT…	Step 6	Expanding instructional time.
	Step 7	Providing small group instruction or tutoring that is integrated with core instruction.
	Step 8	Providing additional school supervisory support and attention.
LOW LEVERAGE	Step 9	Reducing class size.
	Step 10	Additional instruction time that is not integrated with core instruction (e.g., afterschool, summer).

STEP 1: Calculate the cost of replacing the principal.

1. **Determine whether principals will be exited from your district, put in an excess pool, or employed in a different position at the same/different school**.
   a. If principals are exited from your district, there is no incremental cost of principal replacement.
   b. If principals are placed in the excess pool with full salary and benefits and the district needs to carry that cost for the full year, the cost of replacement should be the total annual compensation cost (salary plus benefits) of the principal that was removed.
   c. If the principal is placed in another school or kept at the current school in a different position, there is no cost of replacement only if the new leader was already in the district. If the new leader is brought in as a new employee to the district, the cost of replacement is the total compensation cost (salary plus benefits) of the new principal.

STEP 2: Calculate the cost of replacing underperforming teachers.

1. **Determine whether teachers will be exited from your district, put in an excess pool, or employed in a different position at the same/different school.**
   a. If teachers are exited from your district, there is no incremental cost of teacher replacement.
   b. If teachers are placed in the excess pool with full salary and benefits and the district needs to carry that cost for the full year, the cost of replacement should be the total annual compensation cost (salary plus benefits) of the teacher that was removed.
   c. If the teacher is placed in another school or kept at the current school in a different position, there is no cost of replacement only if the new incoming teacher was already in the district. If the new teacher is brought into the district as a new employee, the cost of replacement is the total compensation cost (salary plus benefits) of the new teacher.

STEP 3: Calculate the cost of providing incentives to teachers and leaders.

1. **Calculate the additional principal compensation cost for each school.**
   a. Identify the number of principals/leaders for a single school that will receive additional compensation (e.g., principal, assistant principal).
   b. Determine the additional compensation each principal receives (e.g., increased base salary, a one-time bonus, or any other benefit your district provides).
   c. Calculate cost of incentives:

   Additional compensation each leader received
   x Number of leaders in school receiving the incentive

   Cost of providing incentives to leaders

2. **Calculate the additional teacher compensation cost for each school.**
   a. Identify the number of teachers that will be part of the turnaround intervention.
   b. Determine the additional compensation each teacher receives (e.g., increased base salary, a one-time bonus, or any other benefit your district provides).
   c. Calculate cost of incentives:

   Increase in compensation
   x Number of teachers in school receiving the incentive

   Cost of providing incentives to teachers

STEP 4: Calculate the cost of adding teacher leaders and/or coaches.

1. **First, determine if there are any additional teacher leaders or coaches provided for the turnaround program at each school in your district.**

2. **If so, determine if these additional teacher leaders/coaches are new to the district or if they are already employed by the district but have been reassigned to the turnaround school.**

   a. If there are additional teacher leaders/coaches that have been added to the district, the cost per school is:

   Total compensation (salary plus benefits) for each individual
   x Percentage of time (capacity) spent at one school (e.g., if one leader spends 50% of her time at one school and 50% at another, each school will only bear 50% of the investment)

   Total cost of new teacher leaders/coaches

   Note: In this case, the overall investment across the district increases as they are new employees for the district.

   b. If the teacher leaders/coaches are already employed in the district and are being reassigned to this turnaround school, the cost per school is:

   Total compensation of each reassigned individual
   x Percentage of time (capacity) spent at one school

   Total cost of reassigned teacher leaders/coaches

   Note: In this case, the overall investment across the district stays the same since the employees was already in the district and are simply reassigned to another school.

STEP 5: Calculate the cost of providing support for at-risk students.

1. **Determine the type of additional service(s) that will be offered for at-risk students at each turnaround school (e.g., additional in-class support, afterschool mentorship programs).**

2. **Identify the number of new individuals employed at each turnaround school for at-risk student support.**

3. **Identify the number of existing teachers at a school who will increase their current capacity to provide at-risk student support.**

4. **Calculate the total cost of additional support for at-risk students.**

   Number of new individuals
   Capacity used for turnaround school support for at-risk students (e.g., 100%)
   x Total compensation

   Cost of new individuals

   Number of teachers at school who will increase capacity
   Number of additional hours
   x Hourly compensation

   Cost of existing teachers

   Note: Hourly compensation will most often be stipulated in union contracts. If it is not written as an hourly wage, there will be a set increase in salary for additional services provided.

STEP 6: Calculate the cost of expanding instructional time.

Note: This methodology estimates the cost assuming the district pays teachers their prorated hourly rate for the additional time. The actual cost of expanding instructional time will be dependent on what each district negotiates for the impacted teachers.

1. **Identify the average number of teachers at each turnaround school.**

2. **Identify the total number of additional hours per week to be offered.**

3. **Estimate the hourly rate to be paid to teachers for providing the additional time.**
   a. The hourly rate used for stipends is often already stipulated in the district's union contract.
   b. If not, you can estimate the hourly rate by:
      i. Identifying the district's average teacher salary.
      ii. Calculating the total number of hours taught (if not already stipulated in the union contract):

      Number of teacher days in the school year
      x Average length of the teacher day in hours

      Total teacher hours per year

      iii. Calculating the estimated hourly rate:

      Average teacher salary / Total teacher hours per year = **Estimated hourly rate for teacher**

4. **Calculate the additional stipends for teachers.**

   Estimated hourly teacher rate
   Average number of teachers at the typical turnaround school
   x Total number of additional hours per week to be offered

   Estimated additional stipends that need to be paid out to teachers for extending the instructional day

5. **Repeat this process for any other positions (custodians, clerical, assistant principals, etc.) that may also require stipends for extending the instructional day.**

STEP 7: Calculate the additional teacher compensation costs required to provide small group instruction or tutoring.

1. **Identify the approximate number of additional teachers that will be needed to offer the small group instruction or tutoring at each school.**

2. **Identify the district's average teacher compensation (salary plus benefits).**

3. **Calculate the estimated cost.**

   District's average teacher compensation
   x Additional teachers needed for the small group instruction/tutoring

   Estimated additional cost of providing small group instruction or tutoring

STEP 8: Calculate the cost of providing additional school supervisory support and attention.

1. **Calculate the supervisory cost per school for each zone.**
   a. Identify total spending on each supervisory zone in the district.
      i. *Include the school chief/supervisor.*
      ii. *Include all members of the zone office. Don't forget any direct clerical or technical support staff (data analysts, coaches, etc.).*
   b. Thus:

$$\frac{\text{Total spending in each supervisory zone}}{\text{Total number of schools in the zone}} = \textbf{Supervisory cost per school for every zone}$$

2. **Subtract the average supervisory cost per school for non-turnaround zones from the average supervisory cost per school for the turnaround zones to calculate the cost of the additional support provided to turnaround schools.**

STEP 9: Calculate the cost of reducing class size.

1. **Identify the average number of general education teachers and the average general education classroom enrollment at each school.**
   a. Identify the average number of general education teachers at each school.
   b. Identify the average general education classroom enrollment at each school.
      i. *This includes general education students and all special needs students that may be mainstreamed and sit in a general education classroom (i.e., most often all special needs students EXCEPT special education self-contained students).*
      ii. *Specifically:*

K–12 Total Enrollment
– K–12 special education self-contained enrollment

K–12 students in general education classrooms

2. **Identify the average class size at each school (Worksheet 8, step 3: page 75).**

3. **Calculate the additional teacher compensation costs needed to pay for the new target class size.**
   a. Identify the targeted class size based on the turnaround initiative.
   b. Calculate the approximate number of teachers required at the targeted class size.

$$\frac{\text{Average total K–12 general education classroom enrollment}}{\text{Targeted class size}} = \textbf{Approximate number of teachers required}$$

Note: You may need to do this by grade level if the targeted class size differs by grade.

   i. *Identify the additional teachers needed at the targeted class size.*

Average number of general education teachers at each school
– Approximate number of teachers required at the targeted class size

Additional teachers needed at the targeted class size

c. Identify the district's average teacher compensation (salary plus benefits).

d. Calculate the estimated cost of class size reduction.

District's average teacher compensation
x Additional teachers needed at the targeted class size

Estimated additional cost of across-the-board class size reduction

STEP 10: Calculate the cost of additional instruction time not integrated with core instruction (e.g., afterschool, summer).

1. **Calculate the additional teacher compensation costs needed to pay for the additional time at the turnaround school.**

   a. Identify the approximate number of teachers that will be providing the additional time under the district's turnaround initiative. This may vary depending on the size and scope of the initiative.

   b. Identify the total number of additional hours per week to be offered.

   c. Identify the estimated hourly rate for teacher (Step 6.3.b, page 83).

   d. Calculate additional teacher stipends.

   Estimated hourly teacher rate
   Number of teachers that will be providing the additional time
   x Total number of additional hours per week to be offered

   Estimated additional stipends that need to be paid out to teachers for providing the additional time

2. **Repeat this process for any other positions (custodians, clerical, assistant principals, etc.) that may also require stipends for additional time.**

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ERS Case Study: www.ERStrategies.org — *Publication*

THE TURNAROUND CHALLENGE: WHY AMERICA'S BEST OPPORTUNITY TO DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT LIES IN OUR WORST-PERFORMING SCHOOLS
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Daniel L. Duke, *Principal,* September/October 2004 — *Publication*

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Karen Hawley Miles and Stephen Frank, Corwin Press — *Book*

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